

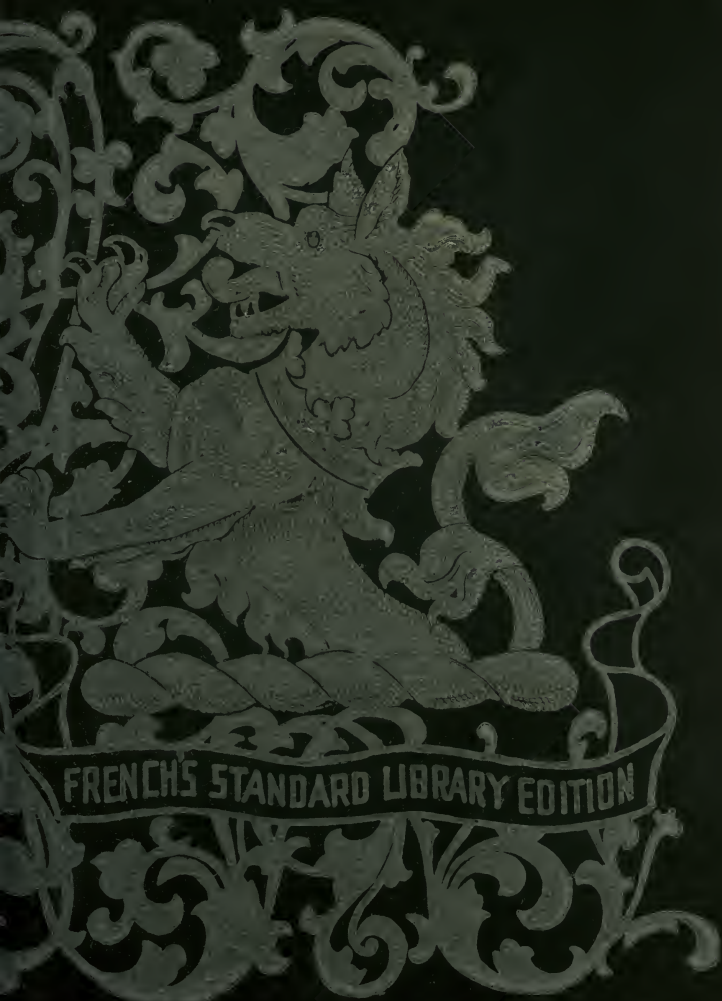
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The Fortune Hunter

MICHELL SMITH



MICHEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New York

Dzdzdz Allen /

THE FORTUNE HUNTER

A Comedy in Four Acts

BY
WINCHELL SMITH

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THE FORTUNE HUNTER.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

NATHANIEL DUNCAN "NAT"...*The fortune hunter*
HENRY KELLOGG.....*A rising young financier*
GEORGE BURNHAM.....*A promoter*
JAMES LONG "JIM" } ..*Two Wall Street*
LAWRENCE MILLER "LARRY" } ..*young men*
WILLIE BARTLETT.....*A millionaire's son*
ROBBINS*Kellogg's servant*
TOM*A newsboy*

VILLAGE CHARACTERS.

SAM GRAHAM.....*The druggist*
MR. LOCKWOOD.....*The banker*
TRACEY TANNER.....*The liveryman's son*
PETE WILLING.....*The sheriff*
MR. SPERRY.....*The drummer*
"WATTY"*The tailor*
"HI"*The old inhabitant*
HERMAN*The errand boy*
BETTY GRAHAM.....*The druggist's daughter*
JOSEPHINE LOCKWOOD.....*The banker's daughter*
ANGIE*The friend of Josie*

ACT I.

SCENE:—*The sitting-room of HENRY KELLOGG's bachelor apartment in East 31st St., near 5th Avenue, New York City.*

The set is very elaborate from a man's point of

THE FORTUNE HUNTER.

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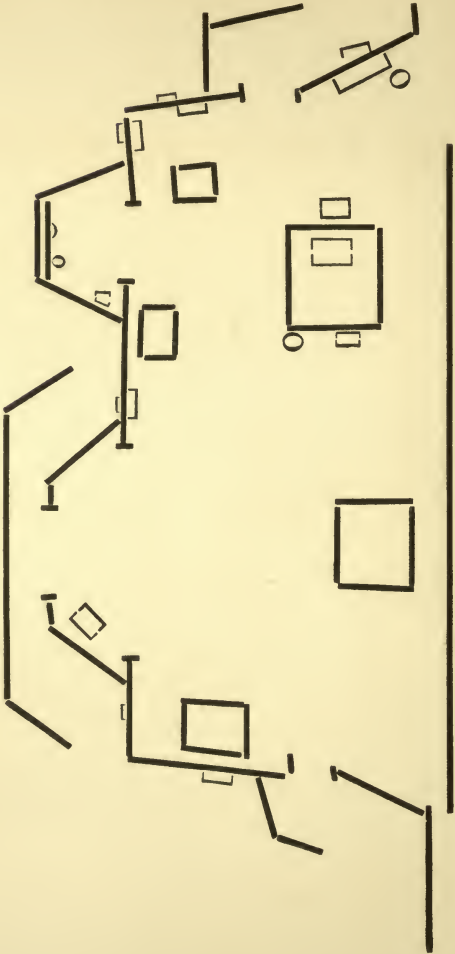
for

view. Medallion on the floor. Up R. mahogany couch with sofa pillows. Several mahogany chairs of various sizes about the room. Down L. C. is writing table with large blotting pad, writing paper, pens, pencils, ink stand and paper cutter, etc. Waste paper basket beside the table. Also large electric stand lamp on this table. (Practical.) Up C. is alcove with open grate, with andirons, fire-hook, etc. Above the grate is mantel with several pieces of bric-a-brac. A window at R. and one at L. of alcove. Hat and coat rack at entrance up R. C. Book cases built into the walls filled with books.

Up R. C. is door (Entrance from street) leading into a little alcove. Portierres in arch of this alcove. Down R. is door leading off to bedrooms. L. is doorway leading into dining-room and kitchen. Portierres in this doorway.

TIME:—June—6:30 P. M.

ACT I.



THE FORTUNE HUNTER.

DISCOVERED:—*At rise of curtain, ROBBINS, who is KELLOGG's valet, is crossing stage. He opens door up R. C. and takes several evening papers from a paper boy who stands outside in doorway.*

ROBBINS. I suppose that you know you're two hours' late with these to-night? (*boy looks at ROBBINS with expressionless face*) It's past six. (*another short pause*) There are plenty of other places about here where I can order papers and the next time you're late I'll find one.

NEWSBOY. All right.

(*ROBBINS closes door sharply, comes grumbling to fire-place up c. and turns on lights, then down stage to table. He puts papers on table and after selecting one for himself, is about to read when the door bell rings. He makes a wry face, goes to the door, taking the paper with him. He holds the door open as GEORGE BURNHAM enters.*)

BURNHAM. (*brusquely*) How are you, Robbins?

ROBBINS. Good-evening, Mr. Burnham.

(*BURNHAM comes down c.*)

BURNHAM. Mr. Kellogg here?

ROBBINS. (*following BURNHAM down L. C.*) He hasn't come in yet, sir, but it's time for him. Won't you sit down? He won't be long now.

BURNHAM. Well, I've a train to catch at 7:18. (*sits right of table*) I'll leave a note for him and try to see him to-morrow.

ROBBINS. Very good, sir.

BURNHAM. (*taking pencil from pocket*) Yes, I guess to-morrow will be better. Probably he won't want to talk business to-night, eh?

ROBBINS. How so, sir?

BURNHAM. (*about to write—stops*) How so? Why haven't you been reading it there? (*BURNHAM points to newspaper ROBBINS still holds*)

ROBBINS. No, sir.

BURNHAM. You haven't? Why, you've got your thumb right on it. (*ROBBINS looks at paper quickly. BURNHAM watches ROBBINS' face, which shows great surprise*) What do you think of that?

ROBBINS. (*after a glance at paper—ejaculating*) Junior member of the firm!

BURNHAM. That's what! From now on it won't be L. J. Bartlett but L. J. Bartlett & Co. (*begins to write*)

ROBBINS. It's a great promotion, sir.

BURNHAM. To be taken into the biggest firm on Wall Street. I should say it was a great promotion, and Harry—I mean, Mr. Kellogg, deserves it too. Deserves every bit of it, you tell him I said so. Why, he's pulled off more deals for them in the last year.

ROBBINS. He's been very successful, sir.

BURNHAM. (*half turns to ROBBINS*) You can bet he has. He's a great business man and no mistake. If he lives he'll be one of our big millionaires, as sure as you're born. He can't help making money any more than I can, and no one is any more pleased over this big jump than me. You just tell him I said that, will you? (*resumes writing*)

ROBBINS. (*glancing at BURNHAM and smiling*)
Very good, sir. I'll tell him.

(*Door bell rings. ROBBINS starts to door. BURNHAM looks at watch.*)

BURNHAM. Is that him?

(ROBBINS stops.)

ROBBINS. No, sir. He always uses his key.
(*turns up*)

BURNHAM. Wait a minute. (ROBBINS stops again) I'm goin'. (*tears up paper*) Never mind this note. (BURNHAM goes up to get his hat) He 'phoned me to call, but he's late. Just say I was here, will you? (*at door*) He knows what it's about and you tell him that crude oil and gas proposition is sure fire and I'll see him to-morrow.

ROBBINS. (*opening door*) I'll tell him, sir.

(*As ROBBINS opens door, JAMES LONG (called JIM), carrying a parcel, and LAWRENCE MILLER (called LARRY) stand in the doorway.*)

JIM. (*cheery voice*) Ah, Robbins——

BURNHAM. (*breaking in*) Excuse 'me, gentlemen.

LARRY. Certainly, certainly!

(*Both men stand aside and BURNHAM exits. JIM comes down and continues.*)

JIM. Certainly, certainly. Is Mr. Kellogg in?
(*crosses to R. of table*)

ROBBINS. I expect him every moment, Mr. Long.

(LARRY hands ROBBINS his hat.)

LARRY. (*in surprise. Sits on arm of chair R. C.*)
Not home yet?

ROBBINS. Not yet, sir.

(*ROBBINS takes JIM's hat and crosses up to hat-rack.*)

JIM. No wonder he's late to-night. Have you heard the news, Robbins?

ROBBINS. I've just seen it in the evening paper, sir.

LARRY. Do you think Mr. Kellogg knew about it?

ROBBINS. I don't think so, sir. I never heard him mention it.

(*JIM takes out knife, cuts string and opens package, disclosing two quart bottles of champagne. ROBBINS crossing L.*)

JIM. (*LARRY goes L. of table*) Mr. Miller and I came up to drink to the new partnership, Robbins. Have you got a cooler? (*JIM crosses R. C. to ROBBINS*) Don't want these to get warm!

(*Door bell rings.*)

ROBBINS. I'll see to them, sir.

LARRY. (*going up toward door*) There he is.

ROBBINS. (*C.*) No sir. He wouldn't ring.

JIM. (*still holding bottles. Starts for door L.*)
Here, wait! You attend to the door Robbins. We'll do this. I know where the ice-box is in every house I go to. Come on, (*at door*) Larry.

LARRY. Right you are.

(*Exit JIM and LARRY L. ROBBINS goes up to door U. R. C. showing in NATHANIEL DUNCAN, called Nat. He has top coat thrown over his arm, carries stick and umbrella strapped on dress-*

suit case in the other hand. He comes into the room, ROBBINS regarding him with surprise.)

ROBBINS. Why, Mr. Duncan! (NAT comes down into room)

NAT. Hello ROBBINS! (ROBBINS takes coat and hat to rack and closes door)

ROBBINS. I thought you were out West, sir?

NAT. (still quietly) No.

ROBBINS. (goes to NAT) But it was only yesterday Mr. Kellogg sent you a letter to Omaha.

NAT. I didn't get that far——

ROBBINS. Didn't—didn't you like the business, sir?

NAT. No, I don't like any business but that isn't the reason I didn't get to Omaha. (crosses ROBBINS R.)

ROBBINS. (half guessing the reason) No, sir? (taking suit case)

NAT. (looks at ROBBINS and says quietly) They fired me, Robbins——

ROBBINS. I'm very sorry, sir!

NAT. (after a moment's grateful glance at ROBBINS.) Oh, it's all right. I'm used to it. Where's my trunk?

ROBBINS. In your room, sir.

NAT. I want to get some clean things out of it. Fetch along the suit case will you? I'll send for the trunk to-morrow. (starts toward R. door)

ROBBINS. (down C. with suit case. Great surprise) Send for your trunk?

NAT. (stops and turns. Positively) Yes, Robbins, send for my trunk and get it out of your way. (NAT turns R.)

ROBBINS. Are you going away, again sir? Have you got another position?

NAT. (turning to ROBBINS) No, no position, but I'm not going to hang out here any longer.

ROBBINS. May I ask, sir, where you're going to?

NAT. Hell, I think. Here let me have that.
(*taking suit case*)

ROBBINS. (*smiling and very kindly tone*) Mr. Kellogg will never allow you to leave here, sir.

NAT. (*at door R.*) He'll have to.

ROBBINS. (*going L.*) Oh, you are only just a bit blue, Mr. Duncan. (*indicating chair R. of table*) Come, come, please sit down and let me get you something.

NAT. Well, you get it while I pack.

ROBBINS. (*going L.*) Yes, sir.

NAT. (*turning at door R.*) And Robbins——

ROBBINS. (*turning at door L.*) Yes, sir?

NAT. Only put a little in it.

ROBBINS. Only a little what?

NAT. Seltzer! (*Exits R.*)

ROBBINS. Yes, sir. (*exits L. laughing. A moment's pause*)

(HENRY KELLOGG, (*called HARRY,*) opens the door U. R. C. with latch key, WILLIAM BARTLETT, (*called WILLIE*) who is with him enters. KELLOGG follows BARTLETT in.)

WILLIE. (*going R. C.*) I can't stop Kellogg really. I was dressing at the Club, happened to see it in the paper and just dropped around to congratulate you.

HARRY. Your father hadn't told you of it, then?

WILLIE. (*front. Sitting R. C.*) No, the Governor gave up talking business with me long ago. I can't get interested in it. Of course I knew he thought a lot of you and all that, but I hadn't a notion they were going to take you into the firm.

HARRY. (*at table, looking at letters*) I hadn't the slightest idea of it myself until your father called me into his office this morning.

WILLIE. Well, I'm jolly glad of it, old chap.
I——

(JIM and LARRY enter L. JIM with bottles of champagne opened and LARRY with tray of glasses.)

JIM. (at entrance L.) All hail to the future King of American Finance!

HARRY. (shaking hands with boys) Hello, boys, where the deuce did you come from?

LARRY. (L. of table. Putting glasses on table. JIM fills them) Don't be alarmed, we won't stay long. We only came around to take our hats off to you.

JIM. (busy with glasses) And tell you what a great fellow we think you are.

HARRY. (coming over R. laughing) Oh—that's it. Do you know, Mr. Bartlett? Mr. Miller, Mr. Long.

JIM. Glad to know you, Mr. Bartlett.

WILLIE. How de do.

(As WILLIE turns to LARRY.)

LARRY. (coming down a little) I know Mr. Bartlett.

WILLIE. Oh yes, how are you, Miller? Glad to see you.

HARRY. (to JIM) Mr. Bartlett is the son of my employer.

LARRY. Your what?

HARRY. (smiling and correcting himself) I mean the son of my partner.

(Goes up R. to hat-rack and arranges his tie.)

JIM. That's better!

LARRY. (to WILLIE) So you've taken him into the firm?

WILLIE. The Governor has. I'm not in the business, you know—Not the slightest turn for it!

(HARRY returns c.)

JIM. (*goes above table to WILLIE, with the filled glasses*) Here we are. (*hands glasses to WILLIE and LARRY. HARRY R. C.*) We'll drink to him first and then (*goes to HARRY and gives him a glass*) he can drink to his royal little self. (*returns above table, raising glass*) Here's to Henry Kellogg of the firm of L. J. Bartlett & Company.

(*Enter NAT R., dress-suit case in one hand. Sees others.*)

LARRY. (*going a little down*) Hear, hear!

WILLIE. Good work.

JIM. (*as NAT stops and listens*) To the boy who is getting on in the world. (*sees NAT. No one shows surprise at NAT'S presence except HARRY*) Ah, Nat, just in time.

(*NAT goes to meet HARRY and JIM comes down around table with glass—gets another glass and fills it.*)

HARRY. (*crosses quickly and grasping NAT'S hand*) Why, hello, Nat, when did you strike town? (*ROBBINS enters and goes above table*) All my friends seem to be here to-night. (*turns*) Gad, it's a regular surprise party. (*goes c. ROBBINS, with glass on tray, crossing above the others to NAT*) Are there any more around here, Robbins?

ROBBINS. No, sir, Mr. Burnham called, sir, but he wouldn't wait.

(*ROBBINS and JIM reach NAT at the same time, each offer a glass. NAT looks from one to the other, then puts down the suit case and takes both glasses, they all laugh.*)

HARRY. Burnham? Oh, yes, I promised to meet him here.

ROBBINS. He'll see you to-morrow. (*crosses to HARRY, then stops and turns*) Excuse me, sir, but he thinks you deserve all your success and he wants you to know he said so. (*there is a slight laugh. Exits L.*)

LARRY. Well, already now. (*lifts his glass L. of table*) Come on, Nat!

NAT. What's it all about?

LARRY. Why, Harry's good fortune, of course.

NAT. What good fortune?

(*The men look at him.*)

JIM. (*above table*) You don't mean to say you haven't heard?

NAT. Heard what?

JIM. Why, that Bartlett has made Harry a partner!

(*NAT looks quickly at HARRY.*)

LARRY. That's what we're here for—to congratulate him.

JIM. Now do you understand? Once more now. To the boy that's getting on in the world!

(*They drink. NAT drinks from glass, ROBBINS has brought him. Eyes still on HARRY.*)

HARRY. Gentlemen, I am blushing.

NAT. (*going to HARRY*) Oh, Gee, I'm awful glad, old man!

HARRY. (*C., facing front*) Why, of course you are. You got back rather suddenly, didn't you?

NAT. Yes.

WILLIE. (*coming to R. of NAT*) I say, Duncan, don't you remember me?

NAT. Willie Bartlett!

WILLIE. I haven't seen you for years. Not since you left college. (*to the others*) Whenever I used to go on a spree I'd always get Duncan to show me around.

(HARRY goes L.)

NAT. (*goes L.*) Yes, I was pretty good at *that*!

WILLIE. By Jove, he knew more pretty girls! (*to NAT*) Do you know as many now?

NAT. (*goes R.*) No, the list has shrunk.

WILLIE. Oh, I don't believe it. Remember the night you took me out and showed me how to play Faro Bank?

(HARRY, JIM and LARRY talk at L. of table.)

NAT. Yes, I remember. And I remember what a yap we thought my room-mate was, because he wouldn't come with us. (*indicating HARRY*) He was my room-mate.

WILLIE. What, Kellogg?

NAT. (*crosses to WILLIE*) Ah, ha! (*takes suit case, starts for door*) Good-night, Harry. See you later, boys.

HARRY. (*noticing NAT*) Where are you going?

NAT. (*getting hat and coat*) Over to the hotel.

((JIM goes up L. LARRY to table.)

HARRY. (*much surprised*) Hotel? What hotel?

NAT. Where I'm stopping.

(ROBBINS enters, goes to hat-rack above table. Gets hats, etc.)

HARRY. (*goes to NAT*) Where you're—well, here,

you can't go just yet. I haven't had a chance to talk to you.

JIM. Well, we'll toddle along.

HARRY. (*turns to JIM and LARRY, then talks*)
Oh, don't hurry. We've just got here.

WILLIE. I must go, anyway, I've a dinner engagement. (*starts toward door*)

LARRY. You'll be late, won't you?

(*WILLIE stops, goes to HARRY.*)

WILLIE. Doesn't matter. I'm always late. Good-night, Kellogg. Congratulations again. (*turns R. to NAT*)

HARRY. Must you go, really?

WILLIE. (*to NAT, producing card case and taking out card*) Look me up, will you, Duncan? We must have a regular old-fashioned night of it sometime, just for memory's sake. (*gives NAT card*)

(*HARRY and JIM go to door.*)

NAT. (*R. C. taking card, puts suit case down*)
I've memories enough, thanks.

WILLIE. Well, for any reason at all, so long as we have the night. (*goes up*)

(*During this JIM and LARRY have been saying "Good-night" to HARRY. HARRY urging them to stay longer—all in pantomime. LARRY comes down R.—shakes NAT'S hand, saying:*)

LARRY. So long, Nat.

JIM. Good-night, old man.

NAT. (*R. C.*) Good-night.

} (*Nearly together*)

(*ROBBINS has brought their hats and JIM and LARRY, and WILLIE exit. ROBBINS holding the door for them.*)

WILLIE. (*as they go out*) Which way do you chaps go? I've got my car——

(*The door closes.*)

HARRY. (*near door. Going to NAT*) I haven't dined yet, have you?

NAT. (C.) No, but——

HARRY. (L. of table) Good! Suppose we dine here, together. (*as NAT is about to object*) Robbins!

ROBBINS. Yes, sir.

HARRY. Order dinner for Mr. Duncan and me from the Club.

ROBBINS. Yes, sir.

HARRY. Hurry it up, Robbins, we're hungry.

ROBBINS. Yes, sir. (*starts R., then remembering, turns at door L.*) Oh, Mr. Burnham left a message. Said that crude oil and gas proposition was sure fire and he'd see you about it to-morrow. Oh, pardon me, sir, but will you allow me to offer my congratulations?

HARRY. Of course, I will, Robbins, thank you.

ROBBINS. I'm very glad, sir. (ROBBINS *exits L.*)

(HARRY *is so excited and happy he can think of nothing but his own good luck. Goes to NAT, and putting his hand on NAT's shoulders.*)

HARRY. Well, I'm feeling pretty good to-night, Nat.

NAT. You ought to be. (*turns away and sits R. of table L. C.*)

HARRY. You could have knocked me down with a feather when they sprung it on me.

NAT. When did they tell you?

HARRY. Only this morning. I *thought* they might boost my salary for they knew other people on the street had made me offers, but a partnership with L. J. BARTLETT. Think of it!

NAT. I've been thinking of it.

HARRY. It will keep me mighty busy, but you know I like to work.

NAT. (*looking at HARRY*) That's right—you do. (*with a half sigh*) It must be a great thing to like to work.

HARRY. You bet it's a great thing. Why, I shouldn't care to live if I couldn't work. (*sits on edge of table L. C.*) Remember the time I went into the country for my health? (NAT *nods "yes"*) I'll never forget it. Hanging around all the time, doing nothing and every one else busy. Why, I wouldn't go through it again for a fortune. I felt so useless and in the way——

NAT. But, you could pay your board—You had money?

HARRY. Of course, but I felt in the way, just the same.

NAT. (*looking at HARRY*) You did?

HARRY. I did, indeed.

NAT. Suppose you didn't have any money and couldn't pay your board. How would you feel then?

HARRY. (*seeing what NAT is driving at and quickly changing the subject*) Oh, nonsense. But, what are you doing East? I didn't expect you back for two months. I've been so busy talking about myself——

NAT. Go on talking.

HARRY. No. Tell me why you came home?

NAT. (*looks*) My firm did what yours did—sent for me——

HARRY. When was that?

NAT. Wire came two days ago. (*takes up high-ball glass*)

HARRY. Well?

NAT. I got in this afternoon. (*short pause*) I didn't exactly think they'd boost my salary—and they didn't—(*shakes glass to cool drink*) You see they

didn't know that other people made me any offers.
(*looks up at HARRY*) And they hadn't?

HARRY. Have you seen them yet?

NAT. Yes, I've seen 'em!

HARRY. Who'd you see?

NAT. Spaulding.

HARRY. What did he say?

NAT. Said he wanted to ask my advice.

HARRY. About what?

NAT. Whether I thought it was best for them to give up their customers in my territory or send a man out there who could sell goods——

HARRY. (*laughing and getting off table, stands with back to front*) Did Spaulding say that?

NAT. Something like that—(*slight pause*) Oh, he was all right. Offered me a month's salary. Guess he thought it was worth that to get rid of me. (*drinks*)

HARRY. (*after a little pause, in a half scolding tone*) Oh, well, don't let it knock you out? That month's salary will last a while.

NAT. I didn't take it.

HARRY. You didn't?

NAT. (*rises, going R.*) I might have known I couldn't make good. The thing I mind most is—is that it was you who got the job for me ——

HARRY. (*following him c.*) Don't think of that for a moment. I'll find you something else before long and——

NAT. (*decidedly*) No you won't.

HARRY. (*looking at him in surprise*) Don't talk that way. I'll get you in right somewhere only—(*sudden thought*) By Jove—the very thing? Here's this chap Burnham promoting a wonderful scheme for making gas from crude oil. He needs my help! I'll get you in there.

NAT. What good would I be? What do I know about crude oil and gas?

HARRY. But you can learn. All you need——

NAT. Wait a minute Harry. Now once and for all I'm through having you recommend an incompetent man just because we're friends and I'm through living on you when I'm out of a job.

HARRY. You ought to know that you're perfectly welcome.

NAT. I know all that and more. (*looks HARRY in the eye*) I know you've been a prince to me; I know you've kept me going for two years, ever since I found out I couldn't make a living for myself, and I know I can't stand for your doing it any longer. (*they look at each other*)

HARRY. (*turning front*) Well, then that's settled.

NAT. (*sitting R. of table. Emphatically*) Yes, that's settled!

HARRY. (*going up L.*) Do you mind telling me what you're going to do?

NAT. No.

HARRY. (*turning, after waiting for NAT to continue*) What do you mean by "No?"

NAT. I mean I don't mind telling you.

HARRY. (*coming down L.*) Well, what is it then?

NAT. I don't know.

HARRY. Oh! (*there is a pause. Sitting L. of table*) Nat, I've known you for nine years.

NAT. Is it that long?

HARRY. Yes, sir, nine years. And you can't room with a fellow all through college without knowing him pretty well. I know everything about you as well as you know it yourself and I tell you you were brought up all wrong.

NAT. Well, I've been brought down all right.

HARRY. You know your father always sent you more cash than you could spend and never let you think of the value of money, or how hard it is to earn, and then——

NAT. Yes, and then he went broke—and died,

HARRY. Yes; and all you had left was an impractical education in your head.

NAT. And not enough of that so you'd notice it.

HARRY. No wonder you couldn't jump in and earn money.

NAT. (*thinking. Looking at HARRY*) That's all very fine but the truth of it is, I haven't got it in me. I hate work as much as you like it, but at that I had a good hard try. You may not think so, but I did; and I found out that they don't pay enough for any work that I can do for a man to live decently on.

HARRY. What do you mean by decently?

NAT. Have you ever tried living in a six dollar a week New York boarding-house?

HARRY. No.

NAT. I have. Kept books in a fish market for nine. Tried paying laundry bills and clothing myself on three. Did the whole thing; you know, only one schooner of beer a day and rolled my own cigarettes. Didn't have to get to work until five in the morning and I lasted eight weeks at that job, before I was taken sick. Shows what a great constitution I have. I've tried all the jobs that are open to a man with a knowledge of Latin and Greek and higher mathematics. Shipping clerk, time-keeper, cashier, all of 'em; and I decided that I'd rather die than live the way I had to live on such wages. I thought I had a chance when I was taken ill at the fish market—there was nothing doing; I was well again in two weeks. Perhaps a fellow can stand those boarding-houses that's been brought up in them—but when you've been used to the other thing, it's unbearable—filthy rooms—awful grub and the crowd you have to meet.

HARRY. And that's what you are thinking of going back to?

NAT. I will, before I'll sponge on you any longer. But on the level I'd rather try the East River or turn

the gas on. What's the use? That's the way I feel.
(*looks front*)

HARRY. Oh, rot! All you want is a way to earn some money.

NAT. No, *get* it! I'll never be able to *earn* it! That's a cinch!

HARRY. Well! There *are* ways to "*get*" it.

NAT. I wish I understood the burglar business.

HARRY. (*amused*) Would you steal to get it?

NAT. I can't think of anything I wouldn't do to get it.

HARRY. I know a way, if you're not too particular that you can be worth a million in a year.

NAT. (*about to light a cigarette, stops. Looks at HARRY*) Say that again.

HARRY. (*slowly*) You can be worth a million dollars in one year.

NAT. (*still looks at him and then smiles*) What would they do with me if I were caught?

HARRY. Oh, it's perfectly legal. Done every day.

NAT. And I could do it?

HARRY. A fellow like you couldn't fail. (NAT *after a moment's pause, takes up and drinks rest of drink*) Why, I've thought this scheme over for years and I'll bet anything it'll work. Would you like to try it?

NAT. Would I like to try it? (*short laugh*) That's my first laugh this month.

HARRY. I'll tell you how you can do it.

NAT. (*turns front*) Oh, don't kid me, Harry.

HARRY. Never more serious in my life. If you want to try it, and will follow the rules I give you I'll guarantee you'll be a millionaire in a year.

NAT. (*seeing HARRY is in earnest, speaks very rapidly with excitement*) I'll follow all the rules in the world. Come on! I'm getting palpitation of the heart. What have I got to do?

HARRY. Marry!

NAT. Marry?

HARRY. Marry!

NAT. Who?

HARRY. A girl with a million.

NAT. (*he sinks back in his chair despondently*)
Say Harry, it's a shame to stir me up like this.

HARRY. I'm not stirring you up. I mean what I say.

NAT. Oh, come off, do you suppose a girl with a million dollars would take a chance on *me*?

HARRY. I'm sure of it.

NAT. What's the matter with her?

HARRY. There is no particular her. You can take your pick. I've no more idea who she is than you have.

NAT. (*losing patience*) What the devil are you getting at?

HARRY. I'll tell you. This is a pet scheme of mine. Have you ever lived in a small country town? A town with one measly hotel, about twenty stores and five churches.

NAT. No.

HARRY. Well, I have. Do you know what becomes of the young people who grow up in a place like that?

NAT. (*impatiently*) No—o!

HARRY. Then let me tell you. The boys, who've got stuff in 'em, get out and become the biggest men in our cities. The Yaps stay there and clerk in father's store. But it's not so easy for the *girls* to get away. A few of them do by going to boarding schools and colleges and meeting and marrying some chaps from a City, but most of them have to stay at home. Why, by the time kids are old enough to think of getting married there isn't a small country town in America where you won't find four times as many girls as boys, and such boys! There isn't one in ten, that a girl who's got any sense at all could force herself to marry. Do you see? Demand forty

times the supply. Do you know there are twenty times as many good looking old maids in country towns as there are in the cities. It's a fact, because when they were young they couldn't lower themselves enough to accept what was left in the local market. Do you see what I'm getting at?

NAT. (*who has been listening intently*) No.

HARRY. Well, you will in a moment. Now take a young chap from the city with a good appearance, educated, more or less of a gentleman, who doesn't talk like a Yap or walk like a Yap or dress like a Yap, or act like a Yap, thrown into such a town. Why I tell you there's nothing to it.

NAT. It's wonderful to listen to you!

HARRY. It's good sense, anyway. Now, here you are, down on your luck, don't know how to earn your living, refusing to accept anything from your friends, ready to lie, steal, or murder to get some money, and on the other hand, here are hundreds of country heiresses with plenty of money for two, who you may easily fall in love with, leading the most unhappy lives. Now why not take one—and her money, make her happy, be happy yourself and be on Easy Street for the rest of your life?

NAT. (*takes deep breath and turning front*) I can't help thinking there's a catch in it somewhere.

HARRY. Not if you follow my instructions. Everything depends on how you go at it. There are a lot of things to contend with at first. But I'll show you how it can be done to a moral certainty.

NAT. (*turning away*) Well, it's a pretty rotten thing deliberately starting out to marry a woman for her money—(*turns back to HARRY*) but it isn't rotten enough to stop me. What have I got to do?

HARRY. Then you'll try it!

NAT. I'll try anything.

HARRY. Well, then, first pick out your town, one of about two thousand inhabitants. Most all of 'em have a few rich men with daughters, but we'll make

sure of that when we select one. Of course the town that is the suburb of a city is barred.

NAT. Why?

HARRY. Oh, they don't count. The girls in 'em always know people in the City and that spoils the game.

NAT. I see.

HARRY. Now here's the hard part for you, but necessary to make it a sure thing.

NAT. Go ahead.

HARRY. Well, here are things you mustn't do—you mustn't——

NAT. Wait a minute. (*takes out note-book and writes as HARRY talks*) mustn't do——

HARRY. You mustn't swear or use slang, you mustn't smoke and you mustn't drink. (*NAT suddenly looks up at HARRY*) It might be fatal if you were ever known to go into the hotel bar. And, for a time, you mustn't accept any invitations to dances, parties or even Sunday dinners.

NAT. (*whose face has fallen somewhat*) Why Sunday dinners?

HARRY. Sunday is the only day you'll be invited. Dinner on week days is from 12 to 12:30 and no time for guests.

NAT. Oh!

HARRY. Now here are the things you must do.

NAT. Go on. (*NAT begins writing again*)

HARRY. You must dress faultlessly but quietly. Clothes all dark and plain but the very best style, in fact, the best of everything, shirts, collars, ties, hats, socks, shoes, underwear——

NAT. Ain't I apt to be raided?

HARRY. You must keep your shoes polished, be clean shaven and manicured.

NAT. (*whose face has grown more and more gloomy*) Is that all?

HARRY. No, you must work!

NAT. (*looks at HARRY and then turns away*) I

knew there was a catch in it. You mean I must get a job?

HARRY. Yes.

NAT. (*giving up*) That settles it.

HARRY. Oh, no, I'll tell you how easy enough. And then, to cinch the whole business you must go to church!

NAT. (*looking up*) What for?

HARRY. That's the most important thing of all.

NAT. Does going to church make a hit with a country girl?

HARRY. It makes the biggest kind of a hit with her popper and mommer, and that's very necessary when you're looking for their money. You must work and you must go to church.

NAT. (*writing*) Can't you think of something more?

HARRY. (*smiling but continuing*) Church and work are the biggest parts of the game, but you've only got to keep them up until you've landed what you're after. As soon as you get to your town hunt up some old woman who'd like to take a boarder; make arrangements with her and move in. Be sure and find one who talks a lot so she'll tell the neighbors all about you. Don't worry about that, though, they all talk! When you've located, stock up your room with about twenty of the driest looking books in the world, have drawing instruments, pencils, pens, red and black ink and all that sort of thing on the table, and make the room look as if you were the most profound student ever. Be sure and have a well worn Bible too.

NAT. I'm going to have a swell time I can see that.

HARRY. Next make the rounds of the stores and ask for work. Try and get into the dry goods store if you can. The girls all shop there, but anything will do except a grocery or a hardware store or places like that. You mustn't take any job where you'll soil your clothes or get your hands rough.

NAT. I'd have a fine chance to cop out a millionaire's daughter if I was a ribbon clerk, wouldn't I?

HARRY. The best in the world! The ribbon clerk is the social equal of the rich girls in towns like those. He calls her Mary and she calls him Joe.

NAT. (*writes*) All right. I'll be a dry goods clerk. What next?

HARRY. The store keepers are not apt to employ you at first, they'll be suspicious of you.

NAT. I dare say.

HARRY. But don't let that worry you. Just call and say, "I'm looking for employment."

NAT. (*writing*) "I'm looking for employment."

HARRY. Yes, but don't press it. Say it and go out.

NAT. (*writing*) "Say it and go out." I can get that right easy. It's always that way when I ask for work.

HARRY. They'll send for you after a time. When they see you'll draw trade. And *every* Sunday, church! Pick out the one the rich people go to. Go in quietly and do just as they do. Stand up and sit down, look up the hymns and sing. Be careful not to look as if you were trying to show off. Don't sing too loud or anything like that, but do it all modestly, as if you were used to it. Better go to church here two or three times and get the hang of it. Now nearly all the wealthy old ducks in those towns are church deacons and though they might not speak to you for months on the outside, it's their business after church is over to shake hands with you, hope you enjoyed the sermon and ask you to come again, and they'll all take notice of you from that time on.

NAT. (*admiringly*) No wonder they made you a partner!

HARRY. Now if you follow these rules not only will all the girls in town be falling over themselves to get you, but their fathers and mothers will be helping them. Then all you've got to do is to pick

out the one with the most coin and let her propose to you.

NAT. Let her propose to me?

HARRY. Let her propose to you.

NAT. (*long sigh*) Whew! How am I going to live until I get in the dry goods store?

HARRY. I'll stake you.

NAT. No you won't. I wouldn't——

HARRY. Now stop! It's not the slightest risk, if you'll play the game out. For a while the dullness will drive you half crazy.

NAT. I don't mind the dullness.

HARRY. Then listen; to-morrow go to the tailors and furnishers and don't pike about it. Get plenty and the best of everything, and I'll pay for it.

NAT. Now see here.

HARRY. Wait—this is a business proposition. No friendship in it. You give me your word of honor to see this through and faithfully follow instructions and after you are married to pay me a thousand dollars beside what I advance you and I'll consider it a mighty good deal for myself.

NAT. You really mean it?

HARRY. Every word of it!

NAT. (*offering hand*) Then I'll go you. Word of honor.

HARRY. (*shaking hands*) Right you are. You can be ready in two weeks' time. I'll get you your wardrobe and give you five hundred dollars cash. That's more than you can spend if you don't get any job.

(ROBBINS enters L., with two cocktails on tray.)

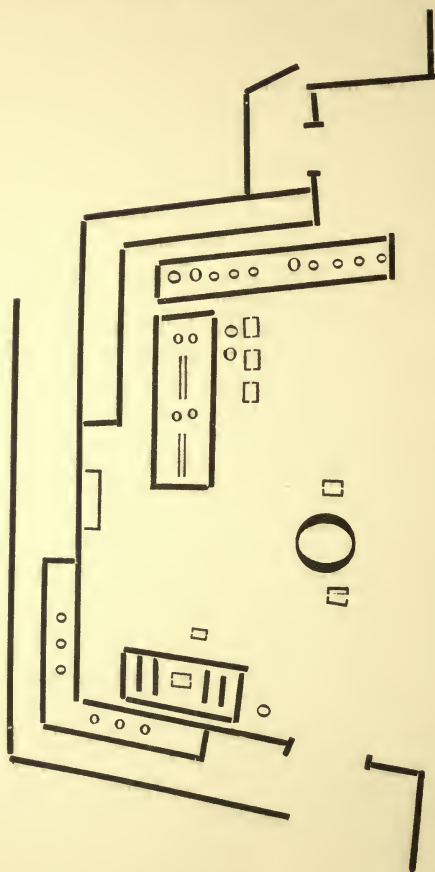
ROBBINS. Dinner, sir! (*offers cocktails*)

HARRY. (*taking glass and rising*) Well, here's to the fortune hunter!

NAT. (*rising also and raising glass*) God help the the future Mrs. Duncan!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.



ACT II.

SCENE:—SAMUEL GRAHAM'S *drug store in Radville, Pa.* It is a desolate and dilapidated old store, the soiled and faded paper cracking off the wall in spots. Village street backing.

Window up R. in which are several old bottles and odds and ends, sponges, moth-balls, etc. Two gas jets for lighting up the window. Old hat rack to L. of window on the wall. Up R., inside of window, old work bench with various tools and a model of some sort. Underneath the bench is some sort of an arrangement looking like a dentist's laughing gas arrangement with pipes leading to a small tank. A rubber hose leads from this tank to a gas jet just above it. (This gas jet is practical, being the one BURNHAM lights during the ACT.) Up R. C. is an old bench made out of a couple of saw horses with a model of one of MR. GRAHAM'S inventions. Old chair in front of work bench. An old stove down C. with pipe leading off (Overhead) to L. An old chair to L. of it and an old box to R. of it. Up L. is an old prescription counter with several large bottles all of which are empty or nearly so and an old cigar case with the glass broken, several packages and an old candle holder with candle. L. and running obliquely up and down stage is soda counter with a practical tap, with glasses and holders and a few bottles all of which are empty except one which is about half full of vanilla syrup. Behind soda and prescription counters are rows of dirty shelves with numerous bottles of various sizes, most of which are empty.

On lower shelf of row behind the soda counter is a flask of whiskey and a whiskey glass.

Down R. is door leading to the street with the name of S. GRAHAM on the door—half of the letters are missing.. On L. is door leading to office. On this door is some lettering which was once "Office" but now looks like "Of ic."

TIME:—June. A quarter to twelve—Noon.

DISCOVERED:—WATTY and HI seated at stove C.
WATTY L. on old box and HI R. on old chair.

HI. Yes sir, he's the poorest man in this town.

WATTY. Yes, I guess he is.

(BETTY enters from Office door L. with a jug and box and old papers. Puts jug and box on counter L. and puts papers into stove C.)

WATTY. Where's your father gone, Betty?

BETTY. He was going over to the bank to see Mr. Lockwood and I don't know where else. *(at stove)*

HI. *(BETTY going up L.)* I don't envy him his call on Blinky Lockwood none. *(laughs)*

WATTY. Maybe he's depositin' his coupons. Is that it? *(HI and WATTY laugh. BETTY looks up sharply)*

BETTY *(going behind counter)* Perhaps they're going to charge rent to the ones who sit around here all day.

(TRACEY enters R., crosses to BETTY L.)

HI. *(rising and knocking pipe against stove)* There, there, now, Betty! Don't get sarcastical. 'Tain't pretty in a young girl.

TRACEY. *(handing BETTY letter)* Note for you

from the Lockwood's, Betty, Josey asked me to bring it around.

BETTY. (*suspiciously*) From the Lockwoods? for me?

TRACEY. Yah ha! It's an invitation. I got four more to take. I've got *five* more but one of 'em's for me. (*turns and goes R.*) Hope you'll have a good time when it comes off.

BETTY. But what is it Tracey?

TRACEY. It tells in the invitation; g'bye.

(TRACEY *exits*. BETTY *opens note, reads it and puts it into pocket, then goes up to counter and works C.*)

WATTY. That's to the party Josie's a givin'; It'll be the biggest time you ever see.

HI. I figger she's a gettin' it up fer that New York Dood.

WATTY. Duncan?

HI. Ya ha.

WATTY. I didn't know he was 'quainted with the Lockwood's.

HI. I didn't know he was 'quainted with nobody.

WATTY. Wal; he's durned curious—he's boardin' with Hetty Carpenter and she says he's allis a settin' in his room a studyin' and studyin' and a studyin'—nobody ever hardly sees him 'cept in church.

HI. I claim he's a 'spicious character.

WATTY. Don't look to me as though he knew enough to be much of anything. (*chuckling*)

HI. If he's a sure 'nough student and there ain't no outs about 'im, what in tarnation is he doin' here? That's what I'd like to have somebody tell me.

WATTY. Hetty says he wants a quiet place to study.

HI. Oh, fiddle, you don't ketch no Noo York young feller a settlin' down in Radville 'less he's

crazy or somethin' worse but tain't no use tellin' Hetty Carpenter that, if anybody says a word again' him, she shuts 'em right up.

WATTY. (*rising*) 'Tain't only Hetty, but all the women's on his side. That's proof enough to me he ain't right. (*going up, seeing BETTY*) What do you think about him, Betty?

BETTY. I haven't seen him. (*both men regard her with astonishment*)

HI. (*going toward BETTY*) Ain't seen him? Why he's been here more'n a month. Ain't seen him? Well, don't you waste no more time adoin' it. He's a terrible dood.

BETTY. I don't want to see him. (*exits into office*)

WATTY. (*coming down to R. of stove and sits in chair. HI is L. C. filling his pipe*) I've pressed some o' his clothes when he was livin' at the hotel. I never see such clothes. Such goods and linin's.

(*BETTY enters.*)

HI. (*L. of stove and lighting match*) Roland Barnette says they ain't stylish though. Too much like an undertaker's git up (*lights pipe*)

WATTY. Well, Roland oughter know—he's the fanciest dressed up felier in the county. (*sits on box L. of stove*)

HI. When this cuss Duncan fust come here everybody but me figgered he had stacks of money—guess they're singin' a different tune now since he's been goin' around to the stores askin' for work.

WATTY. Yes I guess they be.

HI. He come into Leonard's yesterday and asked for a job but the minit Len looked up at him he turned right around and snuk out without a waitin' for Len to say a word. He's the curiousest critter we ever had in this town.

WATTY. Yes, I guess he is. (*clock strikes twelve*) That's noon. I'll go.

HI. Well, I'll go with you.

(LOCKWOOD enters.)

LOCKWOOD. (*shortly*) Good mornin'.

WATTI and HI. Good mornin' Mr. Lockwood.
(*they exit*)

LOCKWOOD. (*crosses L. to BETTY*) Where's your father?

BETTY. (*who is kneeling in front of counter*)
He went to the bank to see you.

LOCKWOOD. Oh he did, did he? Did he have anything for me?

BETTY. I don't know sir. I'm afraid not.

LOCKWOOD. Well, if he didn't there's no use seein' me. It won't do any good

BETTY. (*angry—turning*) I guess he knows that.

LOCKWOOD. (*eyeing her*) He does, eh? Well that's a good thing. Saves talk. (*looking around*) You don't do no business here, not to speak of, do ye?

BETTY. (*with no interest*) No sir, not to speak of. (*then with a desire to thank him, rising*) Oh, Mr. Lockwood, Josie sent me an invitation to her party.

LOCKWOOD. She has—has she? Huh! (*short unpleasant laugh, then goes up, glancing quickly and keenly around the store—BETTY goes behind the counter with pail*) Your father's still fooling with his inventions, ain't he—what's he inventin' now?

BETTY. I don't know what it is. (*pointing up R.*) There's the model he's working on.

LOCKWOOD. (*goes to model R. and looks it over disdainfully*) Foolishness! Why don't you tell him not to waste his time this way?

BETTY. (*hopelessly*) Because he likes it.

LOCKWOOD. (*up R.*) What difference does it make? It don't bring him nothin' does it?

BETTY. No sir!

LOCKWOOD. (*coming down below stove*). Nor do any good.

BETTY. No

LOCKWOOD. No sircce, it don't. He oughter stop it. What does he do with these things? (*pointing to models*) When he gets them finished?

BETTY. Nothing.

LOCKWOOD. That's it, nothin'—nor never did, did he?

BETTY. When he had money he used to get them patented; but he can't any more. (*coming down below counter*)

LOCKWOOD. Not much he can't. He used to get that money from me. I thought at fust there might be somethin' in 'em. I oughter have known better.

BETTY. (*angrily*) He wouldn't a got money from you if he hadn't thought he could pay it back.

LOCKWOOD. (*grimly*) No nor if I hadn't thought he could——

BETTY. Huh! (*glances at him angrily and exits*
L. LOCKWOOD turns R. as if to go. ROLAND BARNETT enters with MR. BURNHAM R. BARNETT stops surprised upon seeing LOCKWOOD)

BARNETT. (R. C.) Oh, I didn't know you were here, sir.

LOCKWOOD. Yes—you needn't bother with this matter—I'll 'tend to it myself.

BARNETT. I didn't come to see about the note—Sam was over to the bank to see you about that. (BURNHAM comes down R. of BARNETT) Oh Mr. Lockwood, let me introduce you to a friend of mine, Mr. Burnham from New York.

BURNHAM. (*crossing to ROLAND. Shaking hands with LOCKWOOD*) How are you?

LOCKWOOD. How de do?

BARNETT. I brought Mr. Burnham over to see Sam about——

BURNHAM. (*breaking in suddenly and with warning glance at BARNETT*) Yes, Barnett's been showing me around town a bit. (*crosses to LOCKWOOD*) Pretty little place, I think.

LOCKWOOD. Here on business?

BURNHAM. (*turning*) Oh no, not exactly. Just looking about.

LOCKWOOD. Only "looking" eh?

(BURNHAM *sees the wink from LOCKWOOD's affected eyes and looks at him uncertainly.*)

BURNHAM. Ah, ha, that's all—(*LOCKWOOD winks again*) Why—don't you believe it?

LOCKWOOD. I don't see no reason why I shouldn't. (*going to door*) I hope you'll like what you see. Good day.

BURNHAM. So long, Mr. Lockwood.

LOCKWOOD. (*at door*) Be back at the Bank at one, Roland.

BARNETT. Oh yes sir—I'm always on time.

(LOCKWOOD *with a grunt at BARNETT's last remark exits R. briskly.*)

BURNHAM. What was he winking at me for?

BARNETT. He wasn't winking—he couldn't help doing that—it's a twitching he's got in his eye—that's why they call him Blinky Lockwood.

BURNHAM. Oh, that was it.

BARNETT. Say he's got so much money he can't count it.

BURNHAM. (*looking up*) Well, he looks as if he'd always hang onto it.

BARNETT. Don't you be so sure about that—I'm as good as engaged to his daughter.

BURNHAM. Is that so? Has he got more than one?

BARNETT. (*near stove R.*) No, Jose's an only child. (*BETTY comes out of office. BARNETT turns and sees her. To BETTY*) Your father about?

BETTY. (*without interest*) No but he'll be back any minute.

BARNETT. (*crossing to her*) Well, Mr. Burnham wants to see him right away. He's come clear from New York on purpose to——

BURNHAM. (*stopping him abruptly and stepping in front of him*) Oh no, no—(*turning with a scowl. To BARNETT*) What's the matter with you? (*BARNETT goes up a little and leans on counter L. To BETTY again*) No, I happened to be in town and thought I'd like to have a little talk with your daddy, that's all. Nothing important, but if you know where to send for him——

BETTY. (*goes up R. takes off apron and gets hat*) I guess I can find him.

BURNHAM. (*easily*) All right. Suppose you try.

BETTY. (*going toward door*) Will you wait till I get back?

BARNETT. 'Course we will.

BURNHAM. No use to give him my name, he doesn't know me.

BETTY. (*in door*) I'll tell him you're from New York, that'll be enough. (*exit*)

BURNHAM. (*turning on BARNETT*) You're a fine thing you are. First you came near telling the banker about this and then you start in with the daughter in a way that would make this old duck want a million for his burner.

BARNETT. (*laughing, sitting up on counter, swinging legs*) Oh, that needn't bother you. Sam Graham's the easiest thing in the world. Ask anybody in town if he ain't. He had plenty of money when he first came here and he's always worked hard, but he kept lendin' and lendin' and endorsin'

notes for people. He ain't got a penny now, and if you offer him anything for that burner he'll grab it, you see if he don't.

BURNHAM. (*turning L.*) Broke, is he?

BARNETT. I should say he was. Just look at this store. (BURNHAM *looks about. Going to BURNHAM*) and listen, we had a note of his come due at the bank yesterday, he can't pay it and Lockwood ain't goin' to renew it fer him.

BURNHAM. (*rises, interested*) Is that so?

BARNETT. Sure. (*going up and looking about*) Say, I can show you that burner now. Maybe if you saw it work you wouldn't need to give him anything! I don't think it's patented. (ROLAND *goes R. to burner*)

BURNHAM. See here—(ROLAND *stops and turns—BURNHAM goes up to ROLAND*) I ain't a crook, get that in your head. Any deals I pull off, I pull off square. Besides I know it's patented. I looked it up. (*coming down*)

BARNETT. (*pointing U. R.*) See, there's the thing now. (BURNHAM *goes R. above stove and looks quickly at an object resembling a dentist's laughing gas arrangement, BARNETT goes to it explaining. BURNHAM goes R. below bench*) The oil goes here, this is the burner, he lights it here and the gas goes up through that pipe. There's one of the jets, look. (*points to gas jet on lower side of window*)

BURNHAM. (*listens attentively to BARNETT and then crosses him to jet, looks into street, then strikes a match and turns on gas and lets it burn an instant then turns it off*) Great guns!

(GRAHAM *comes down past windows, outside.*)

BARNETT. (*enthusiastically*) It's all right, ain't it?

BURNHAM. (*quickly concealing his feelings*) Oh

well, it may amount to something. (*crosses R. C.*) It's hard to tell.

BARNETT. (*excitedly*) Why I tell you it will revolutionize the whole—(*crossing L. C. Noise is heard at door*)

BURNHAM. (*quickly*) Sh—h—who's this? (*door opens*)

BARNETT. That's him now. (*goes up R.*)

GRAHAM. (*enters, sees BURNHAM, smiles and nods pleasantly*) How de do, sir? (*goes up to put his hat away. Sees BARNETT*) Hello Roland. (*BARNETTE comes down between GRAHAM and BURNHAM*)

BARNETT. (*loudly*) Say Sam——

BURNHAM. (*scowls at him*) Sh——

GRAHAM. (*turning and coming down*) Well.

BARNETT. Oh nothing—I was—er—showing my friend Mr. Burnham, from New York, round town and we just happened to look in——

GRAHAM. (*coming down C. looking at BURNHAM*) Took this for the old curiosity shop perhaps. Won't you sit down, sir? (*pointing to chair at R. of stove*)

BURNHAM. (*sits on old chair*) Thank you.

GRAHAM. (*pointing to box at L. of stove*) Try that box, Roland. It don't make a bad seat. (*going to L. toward office. Calling*) Betty! Betty. Where's she gone I wonder? She'd love to see someone from New York. (*turning back C.*)

BURNHAM. (*laughing*) Oh we've seen her, Mr. Graham. She went out looking for you.

GRAHAM. Oh!

BARNETT. (*tactfully with proud look and wink at BURNHAM*) Yes, Mr. Lockwood was here, guess that's what she wanted to find you for?

GRAHAM. (*face growing serious*) Lockwood! Did you tell him I'd been over to the bank to see him?

BARNETT. (*looking at GRAHAM*) Yes, I told him.

BURNHAM. (*noticing expression*) Mean business sometimes asking favors of these bankers eh? Mr. Graham?

GRAHAM. (*crossing R. C.*) Yes, it is unpleasant. (*confidingly*) There's a note of mine due and I'm not able to take care of it or pay the interest just now—(*pauses, thinks a moment and then adds pleasantly*) But Mr. Lockwood is kind—very kind. (*BURNHAM and BARNETT exchange glances*)

BARNETT. I'm afraid you're a little too sure, Sam. When there's money due Lockwood, he wants it.

(*There is a moment's pause, both men watch GRAHAM closely.*)

BURNHAM. (*changing subject*) Barnett tells me you are quite an inventor, Mr. Graham.

GRAHAM. (*smiles, shakes his head slowly*) I've spent most of my life at it but nothing has turned out well—(*pause, then brighter*) Not so far I mean, but I may hit it yet.

BURNHAM. That's the way to talk. Never give up I say. You had a patent on a thrashing machine, didn't you?

GRAHAM. Yes, but I couldn't get anybody to take hold of it. You see I haven't any money Mr. Burnham.

BURNHAM. Well, I'll talk to you about it sometime.

GRAHAM. (*eagerly*) You will?

BURNHAM. Yes. By the way you got your power from gas, is that right?

GRAHAM. Yes, but coal will do just as well. I got a patent on a burner that makes gas from crude oil. I thought it would be cheaper. I could get up steam mighty quick with that gas arrangement. I use it for lighting here now.

BURNHAM. (*now showing much interest*) Well, I declare!

BARNETT. (*rising L.*) Say Mr. Burnham, don't you think you could help Sam to——

BURNHAM. (*rising and breaking in quickly.*) I think I could eat my dinner. Come along, let's go over to the hotel.

GRAHAM. Yes Roland, don't starve your friend. I'm glad you looked in, sir.

BURNHAM. Thank you.

GRAHAM. You'll call again I hope.

BARNETT. Say, Mr. Burnham, if you'll——

BURNHAM. (*motions ROLAND to stop*) There that will do—(*to GRAHAM*) I may drop in if I have time on my way to the train and look over things.

GRAHAM. (*C.*) I'd be glad to show you anything I've got here——

BURNHAM. All right, good day—I'll see you again, perhaps.

GRAHAM. Good day sir. Good day Roland.

ROLAND. Good-bye.

(BURNHAM and BARNETT exit up R. outside of window slowly.)

GRAHAM. (*stands alone in thought a moment*) Mr. Lockwood over here—ah, well, he's kind, very kind.

(*With a sigh he goes to table up R. on which is model and begins working. BURNHAM and BARNETT stop up at window and BARNETT points out and is talking about NAT as he comes along reading a book and then BURNHAM and BARNETT pass on. NAT looks about and puts book under his arm and looks into window again and then comes down and enters door R. He crosses to C.*)

GRAHAM. (*keeping on working*) Well!

NAT. (*stops and turns*) Quite well, thank you.

GRAHAM. (*after pause without looking up and in very pleasant tone*) Anything you want?

NAT. Would it be possible for me to speak to the proprietor for a moment?

GRAHAM. (*still working on model*) I should judge it would. Go right along.

NAT. Might I ask, are you Mr. Graham?

GRAHAM. Yes sir, that's me.

NAT. (*looking up page in Act I note book and glancing at it*) I'm looking for employment.

GRAHAM. Employment? (*drops tools. Looks up then rises and goes to NAT*) Well I declare. You're the stranger the whole town has been talking about. I'm real glad to see you.

NAT. (*referring to note book*) If at any time you should have an opening here that you can offer me I will endeavor to give satisfaction. Good day sir. (*crosses to door*)

GRAHAM. (R. C.) Are you in a hurry?

NAT. (*turns at door*) Oh no sir—only I mustn't press it. Just ask for it and go—I mean—I don't want to take up your time.

GRAHAM. Oh well, don't let that worry you. If you're really looking for a job, I'd like to give you one first rate.

NAT. You'd—you'd like to—oh—(*much surprised*) You don't mean it.

GRAHAM. (*nodding and smiling*) Yes.

NAT. (*coming toward him*) You're the first man I ever met who's felt that way about it.

GRAHAM. (C. *half turns*) The trouble is my boy that my business is so small I don't need any help. There isn't much of anything to do here.

NAT. That's just the sort of a place I'd like.

GRAHAM. (*looks at him*) Eh!

NAT. I mean, I'm willing to take anything, no matter how little there is to do.

GRAHAM. (*smiling*) This might suit you then.

NAT. I wish you'd let me try it.

GRAHAM. To tell you the truth sir, I can't afford it. When your pay was due I'm afraid I shouldn't have any for you.

NAT. I don't mind that part.

GRAHAM. What's that?

NAT. Mr. Graham, if you'll teach me the drug business I'll work for you for nothing.

GRAHAM. What do you mean?

NAT. (*looks about a bit—then confidentially*) Well between you and me, I've been here five weeks with nothing to do but look at a book and it's got me crazy enough to want to work.

GRAHAM. (*thoughtfully*) Well, I swan! I'd better take you over to Sothern and Lee's. They'd be glad to get you at the price.

NAT. No I've been there. Why not here?

GRAHAM. I'm afraid you wouldn't learn much. I don't do business enough to give you a good idea of it. They get all the trade.

NAT. (*sudden energy*) Don't you think if I came in here we could build up the business?

GRAHAM. No, I don't think so.

NAT. (*crossing GRAHAM to L.*) No! Of course not—you're right.

GRAHAM. I haven't got capital enough to get stocked up, that's the real trouble. Folks have got into the habit of going to the other store because I'm out of so many things. (*NAT looking about store—turning to GRAHAM.*)

NAT. How do you expect to do business unless you have things to sell?

GRAHAM. I don't expect it my boy. You see I'm working on an invention of mine; (*half turning and pointing to gas arrangement R.*) and if that should turn out right, I'd get some money for it and stock up.

NAT. How much business do you do here now?

GRAHAM. Some days I take in a dollar or two and some days nothing. (*pointing to fountain L.*) I fixed up my soda fountain last week and I'm getting a little out of that but I need some more syrups. (*NAT goes to fountain and looks it over*) I've only got vanilla.

NAT. Soda water—all the girls around here drink soda, don't they?

GRAHAM. Oh yes.

NAT. (*coming down*) Mr. Graham, I wish you'd let me come in here for a time. I don't care about wages.

GRAHAM. Well my boy, it don't seem quite right to have you work here for nothing—but if you really want to do it, I'll be glad to have you and if times improve I'll be glad to pay you.

NAT. (*enthusiastically.*) That's fine. When can I start?

GRAHAM. Whenever you like.

NAT. (*going up and taking off gloves, etc.*) I'd like to now. Where can we get some syrup? (*puts books and gloves on show case*)

GRAHAM. Unfortunately I'll have to buy it.

NAT. (*putting hand in pocket and getting out money*) How much?

GRAHAM. (*retiring away from NAT R.*) Oh no, you mustn't do that—I couldn't allow it.

NAT. I'm either asleep or someone is refusing to take money from me. (*coming down to GRAHAM R. C.*) Oh, that's all right, I'll draw it down as soon as we sell some soda. Will five dollars be enough?

GRAHAM. Oh my yes, but it isn't right for me—

NAT. (*pressing the \$5.00 into GRAHAM's hand*) Nonsense, how can we build up trade without syrup?

GRAHAM. But—

NAT. And how can I learn the business without trade?

(Closing GRAHAM'S hand over the money. Goes up R. C.)

GRAHAM. (*giving up argument and spreading out bill and looking at it*) My oh my—I'll have to write to Elmira for it. (*putting bill in vest pocket*)

NAT. (*at soda counter L.*) We'll telegraph for it.

GRAHAM. Telegraph? That would kill Lew Parker I guess.

NAT. Who's he?

GRAHAM. Telegraph operator and ticket agent. No. I'll write a letter. I think that will do.

NAT. (*brightening and talking rapidly*) All right but tell them to send it at once and send it C. O. D. We'll have to clean up the store a little. We'll put out some signs, eh? (*coming down L. C.*) We've got to get the people in the habit of coming here somehow. (*turning back to GRAHAM looks up at shelves*)

GRAHAM. (*C. Looking at NAT admiringly*) You have *splendid* business ability.

NAT. (*turning to GRAHAM*) What?

GRAHAM. I say you have great business ability.

NAT. (*smiling*) I'll write that to my chum.

GRAHAM. Oh, I can see that you have. Now—I—well, I've been a failure in business. I've been a failure in everything as far as that goes.

NAT. (*after looking at the old man a moment holds out his hand*) Let's shake hands. (*GRAHAM looks up*) For luck.

GRAHAM. (*shaking hands half wonderingly*) My boy—you are—it's very kind of you to buy the syrup—very kind——

NAT. (*smiling*) That's because I've got great business ability. (*turns L. then back to GRAHAM*) Have you got a broom? I'll clean up the store a little.

GRAHAM. The broom's in the cellar, I guess, but—your clothes would——

NAT. Oh that's all right. Where is the cellar?

GRAHAM. (*surprised*) Underneath——

NAT. Is there a stairway?

GRAHAM. Oh yes, over there through the office. (*pointing L.* NAT *goes toward office.* GRAHAM *stops him*) Here, you'd better take a candle. (*goes up to get candle.* TRACEY *enters R.* NAT *goes to him c.*)

NAT. (*bowing*) What can I do for you?

TRACEY. (*R. C. stares at him blankly*) Huh?

NAT. Is there anything you wish to purchase?

TRACEY. (*still staring, motionless*) No ma'am!

NAT. (*bowing solemnly*) Then will you be good enough to excuse me? (*turns and GRAHAM hands him a candle and after bowing to GRAHAM he exits L.*)

TRACEY. (*standing and watching NAT off.* To GRAHAM) Is he workin' here?

GRAHAM. He intends to. (*TRACEY makes a rush for the door*) What did you want, Tracey?

TRACEY. (*at door*) I fergit. (*Exits quickly*)

(GRAHAM *looks after TRACEY, then around at door where NAT went out, then shakes his head and smiles. Goes to bench R. and sits as BETTY comes in. BETTY enters suddenly, white with anger and goes up and hangs her hat behind GRAHAM. She begins the scene quietly but shows that self possession is causing her great effort.*)

GRAHAM. Oh, Betty, I've got a piece of news for you. What do you think of our having—(*seeing her look*) why, what's the matter?

BETTY. Father—can you get me some money?

GRAHAM. Why Betty—what has——

BETTY. Can you get me some money?

GRAHAM. Well—er—how much?

BETTY. Enough to buy a dress—a nice dress—a dress that will surprise folks.

GRAHAM. (*rising*) Tell me what the matter is, Betty. Wanting a dress would never upset you like this.

BETTY. (*handing GRAHAM her invitation*) Look at that.

GRAHAM. (*coming down and reading*) Josie Lockwood's party—she sent you an invitation. Well, that was kind of her—very kind.

BETTY. (*coming down R.*) No it was not kind—it was mean—(*goes U. R.*) *It was mean.*

GRAHAM. Oh, Betty—now don't say that.

BETTY. (*coming down C.*) I heard the girls talking in the post-office. I was around by the boxes where they didn't see me, they were laughing because I was invited. They said the reason Josie did it was because she knew I wouldn't have anythin' to wear and she wanted to find out what excuse I'd make for not going.

GRAHAM. (*soothingly, going to her*) Oh, Betty, Betty, don't you mind what they say.

BETTY. (*taking invitation from GRAHAM, moving L.*) Yes, I do mind. I can't help mindin'. I'm goin' to that party now and I'm going to have a dress to go in too.

GRAHAM. (*sitting R. C. uneasily*) Well, we'll see. I'll try——

BETTY. (*going to him C.*) That means you can't help me?

GRAHAM. Oh, no. No it doesn't—I'll do what—

BETTY. Have you got any money now?

GRAHAM. Well no—not at present.

BETTY. And you can't pay Mr. Lockwood what you owe him on the note, can you?

GRAHAM. No, not to-day, but he'll give me a little more time. He's kind, very kind.

BETTY. Then if you should get any money you'd have to give it to him?

GRAHAM. (*soothingly*) Well, I think it will come out all right.

BETTY. (*wildly, going L.*) Oh, what's the use of talkin' that way? I know you can't do anything for me and so do you. (*with savage resentment, coming back to GRAHAM C.*) I can't understand it. (*NAT appears in door L. with broom, stops undecidedly*) Why is it that I have to be more shabby, than any other girl in town? I don't mind cookin' and doin' the house work and all the rest but why is it that you never can give me anythin' at all? Why is it that everyone looks down on us and laughs at us and sneers at us? (*voice trembling*) Why is it half the time we don't have enough to eat? Other men can take care of their families and give their children things to wear. You have only us two to look after and you can't even do that. It isn't right and if I were you I'd be ashamed of myself—(*stops suddenly full of rage but secretly sorry for what she has said*)

GRAHAM. (*rises slowly. Looks at her a moment and when he speaks his voice trembles*) Why, Betty—I—I—(*brightens with an effort. Rises*) Oh, but things are going to be better soon. You must have a little more patience. (*with sudden thought*) Why there was a gentleman here this morning from New York City talking about an invention of mine.

BETTY. Invention! Oh, father! Everybody knows they're no good. You've been wastin' time on them ever since I can remember and you've never sold one yet.

GRAHAM. But this gentleman seemed quite interested. He's over at the hotel now. (*starting R.*) I'll go over and have a talk with him, you wait here—(*turns and sees NAT*) Oh, this gentleman is

going to be with us in the store. This is my daughter Mr.——

NAT. (*bowing*) Duncan: Nathaniel Duncan. How do you do Miss Graham?

BETTY. (*in great astonishment, forgetting to return bow*) Goin' to be with us? (GRAHAM goes up stage for hat)

NAT. Why, yes— Your father has been kind enough to take me in. I'm to be the soda clerk.

GRAHAM. (*smiling kindly*) You wait here, Betty, till I get back. (*exits R.*)

NAT. (*has his trousers turned up at the bottom and has a broom and dust-pan. There is a long pause. BETTY not recovered from her surprise stares at him steadily, NAT smiles sweetly*) I—I'm going to sweep, if you don't mind. You'll excuse me won't you? (*sweeps*)

BETTY. You don't really intend to work here?

NAT. (*sweeping up stage*) That is my intention—yes——

BETTY. (*annoyed at his tone, thinks he is making fun of her, says sharply*) Where do you think your pay will come from?

NAT. (*solemnly, sweeping to L.*) Heaven perhaps.

BETTY. Huh! You're making a mistake. Father can't pay you anythin'.

NAT. *He'll pay me all I'm worth.*

BETTY. Of course he thinks he can. But he can't. You don't know him.

NAT. (*stands broom against counter, coming down C. to BETTY*) I'm afraid it's you who don't know him—(*suddenly dropping ministerial air and tone and speaking naturally and sincerely, crosses to her*) I'm going to give you a little advice, Miss Graham. Don't speak to your father again as you did just now.

BETTY. (*R. C. Furiously*) What business is it of yours?

NAT. (*L. C.*) None, but just the same I wouldn't if I were you.

BETTY. (*with savage fury*) Well you're not me, understand that? When I want advice from you I'll ask for it and until I do, you let me alone. I know why you talk that way.

NAT. Do you?

BETTY. Yes, I do you! (*she hurls the following at him as fast as she can speak*) You go to church all the time and try to make out you're too religious for anythin' and you like to hear yourself giving Christian advice to poor miserable sinners, you think it's just too lovely of you, that's why you said it if you want to know. Folks wonder what you're doing here. I could tell them. You're here to show off your good clothes and your finger-nails and the way you part your hair and all the other things you do that nobody in New York would pay any attention to. (*stops breathlessly*)

NAT. (*thoughtfully moving L.*) A pretty good guess at that. (*gets broom and sweeps again at L.*)

BETTY. (*surprised at his answer and somewhat mollified in spite of herself c. facing front*) Oh, yes, it's easy enough to give advice when you've got plenty of money and fine clothes.

NAT. I know that. But the only reason I spoke was because I'm strong for your father—and I wanted to do you a good turn too.

BETTY. I don't want any of your good turns.

NAT. Then I apologize—only think over what I said sometime. (*sweeping*)

BETTY. (*almost trying to excuse herself*) I had a good reason for saying what I did to him.

NAT. (*going on with his work*) I know you had.

BETTY. (*surprised. Looking over shoulder at NAT*) You know I had. Well how do you know?

NAT. (*coming down to L. of her—takes broom with him. Lightly leans on it*) Because I've been up against it myself for five years and I know how it feels to see other people getting along when you're not

getting along; to know they have things you don't have. Why I've kept out of the way for days and days rather than to let my successful friends see how shabby I looked. Many a time I've run across the street to avoid meeting some pal who I knew would invite me to have dinner or luncheon or a drink—of soda—or something for fear he would find out that I couldn't "treat" in return. Many a time I've gone hungry and slept in the park until an old friend found me and took me home with him.

BETTY. (*greatly interested*) And your old friend started you on the road to fortune?

NAT. He said so. But it's your father I want to talk about. Now I'll bet he knows more than any other man in this town and besides that he's a fine, square, good-hearted old gentleman, anyone can see that—only he has one awful fault, he doesn't know how to make money and that's mighty tough on you; but when you roast him for it you only make him feel as miserable as a yellow dog and doesn't help matters a bit. He can't change into a sharp business crook now, he's too old a man. Before long he—he won't be with you at all and when he's gone you'll be sore on yourself—sure—if you keep on throwing it into him as you did just now——

(BETTY stands looking at him. NAT turns away.
Begins sweeping—up stage.)

BETTY. (*after a pause—looking front*) I—I won't do it again.

NAT. Bully for you. (*sees JOSIE LOCKWOOD and ANGIE at window*) Sh—customers.

BETTY. (*looking out window*) They've come to see you. Tracey's told them you're here. (*JOSIE and ANGIE are at the door*)

NAT. The tall one's old Lockwood's daughter, isn't she?

BETTY. (*getting her hat up R*) Yes, she's an heiress.

NAT. Then she's the one. (*goes up L turns down trousers, etc.*)

(JOSIE and ANGIE enter.)

ANGIE. Oh, here's Betty now.

JOSIE. (*coming in*) How de do, Betty?

BETTY. (*crossing to door R. speaking to both but with no cordiality*) Hello.

JOSIE. Did you get the invitation? (*winking slyly at ANGIE who grins*)

BETTY. (*at door turning, questioning*) The invitation?

JOSIE. Why I sent you one. To the party you know.

BETTY. Did you?

JOSIE. I gave it to Tracey for you. Didn't you get it?

BETTY. Oh, perhaps I did. (*Exits R. leaving the girls staring after her*)

ANGIE. Well, did you ever?

NAT. (*coming down referring to his note book and replacing it in his pocket*) May I have the honor of waiting upon you ladies? (*both GIRLS turn as if surprised to see him*)

ANGIE. Oh, ha, ha, ha, how do, ha, ha.

NAT. (*most dignified manner*) Good afternoon. (*bows to each separately. They watch him with admiring surprise*)

JOSIE. We thought we'd like some soda. (NAT, a little startled, not knowing how to draw soda)

ANGIE. Yes, it's so warm—we——

NAT. Yes, certainly. (*looks around an instant then goes up behind counter*) Will you step this way, please? (*the girls look at each other and laugh and go to fountain*)

JOSIE. (*crossing to counter*) Thank you.

NAT. (*leaning his hands on counter*) What'll you have—er—would—would you prefer soda or vanilla? (*girls laugh as if it were a great joke*)

JOSIE. (L.) Oh, I hate vanilla.

ANGIE. (L. c.) I do too.

NAT. (*remembering that's all there is*) Oh don't say that. Of course there is vanilla and vanilla. Some vanilla I know is detestable but when you get a really fine—er—imported vanilla, it is quite—er—particularly at this season of the year——

JOSIE. Oh, is it?

NAT. It is indeed, no doubt of it. Especially just now, right after the Bock season—er—I mean when the weather is—is—in a way—vanilla weather.

ANGIE. I like chocolate best.

JOSIE. Well, I'll have the vanilla.

NAT. (*gratefully*) Thank you very much—(*he looks on shelf behind and finally on lower shelf finds whiskey bottle with glass on top, he sets the glass down and smells of the bottle and is surprised at smell of whiskey*) Oh——

JOSIE. What is it?

NAT. I believe it's whiskey. (*ANGIE goes up stage. The girls look at each other. NAT looks about counter, finding several empty bottles with metal caps on the necks. All the bottles are empty except the one which contains the vanilla. He passes her the vanilla bottle and the whiskey glass. The girls look at him in astonishment. Pause*) You—er—wanted vanilla, did you not?

JOSIE. Yes thanks, vanilla. (*another pause*)

NAT. (*indicating the bottle*) Well—that's it.

JOSIE. (*laughing*) I don't want to drink it clear—you mix it with the soda, you know?

NAT. Oh, you want to make a high-ball of it. (*both girls laugh*)

ANGIE. (*going to soda counter and explaining*)

You see you put in the syrup first and then the soda.

NAT. Certainly. (*to JOSIE*) If you'll be kind enough to help yourself to the syrup.

JOSIE. (*laughing*) Oh no, you do it.

NAT. Certainly. (*puts syrup in whiskey glass*) Say "when".

JOSIE. What. Oh, don't put in any more.

(*NAT puts the glass under the tap and tries to work it with no success. The girls, getting interested, come nearer. Suddenly the soda spurts out with such force that it sprays them and the girls jump back, looking themselves over.*)

NAT. (*takes out handkerchief and tries to remove soda off his clothes and face. Apologetically*) Our soda is so strong, you know. (*getting apron and putting it on around his neck*) Now, if you will step over there out of danger, I'll try again. (*the girls go R. NAT takes a large glass this time and turns tap carefully and the soda runs into the glass without any force. Looking up and smiling*) I think it's safe now, I seem to have it under control.

ANGIE. (*going U. L. and suddenly changing the subject*) We've seen you at church, Mr. Duncan.

NAT. Do you have to go too?

JOSIE and ANGIE. What?

NAT. (*drawing another glass of soda*) I mean, do you attend regularly?

JOSIE. (*at counter*) Oh, yes. (*looks at NAT admiringly*) You make it a rule to go every Sunday, don't you, Mr. Duncan?

NAT. It's one of the rules, but I didn't make it.

JOSIE. Won't you join the choir, Mr. Duncan? I want you to awfully.

NAT. Do you? (*offering them the sodas*)

JOSIE. All the girls want him to—don't they, Angie?

NAT. Choir? (*takes out note book and looks at it*)

ANGIE. Oh yes honestly—they're all just dying to meet you. (*they take up the glasses*)

NAT. Well, I'll have to write and ask first.

(*The girls taste the soda and look at each other peculiarly. NAT watches them. ANGIE tastes soda and gives sudden ejaculation.*)

ANGIE. Oh!

NAT. I sincerely hope it's not so very bad.

ANGIE. Do you like it Josie?

JOSIE. (*looks around and sees NAT watching her and smiles*) Mine is perfectly lovely only it isn't very sweet. (*JOSIE sets it down only having tasted it*)

NAT. I made them dry, you know. (*the girls don't understand. Picking up JOSIE's glass and moving toward tap*) I'll put a collar on for you. (*she motions him not to put any more in*)

JOSIE. Oh no, thank you.

ANGIE. (*going to counter and setting down her glasses*) Why don't you try a glass, Mr. Duncan?

NAT. I'm on the wagon.

JOSIE. What?

NAT. I mean I don't drink at all. It's one of the rules.

ANGIE. (*moving R. toward door*) Come on, Josie, we must go, we've been here ever so long. (*JOSIE looks at her, annoyed*)

NAT. Oh, don't hurry I beg of you.

JOSIE. Oh; we haven't hurried. Remember what I said about the choir, won't you?

NAT. (*trying to assume a lover's attitude*) I shall never forget it.

JOSIE. (*crossing R.*) Good-bye.

NAT. (*coming down toward her*) Not good-bye I trust.

JOSIE. (*turns*) Oh, I'll be in again. Oh, my land; I'd forgotten all about paying for the soda.

ANGIE. (*laughing*) The idea!

NAT. Don't speak of it please.

JOSIE. Oh yes, indeed! (*opening purse*) How much is it?

NAT. I beg pardon.

ANGIE. For the soda?

NAT. Oh! Why—er—two for a quarter.

ANGIE. (*going R. laughing*) Ain't you funny!

JOSIE. (*handing him dime*) It's ten cents, isn't it, Mr. Duncan?

[(SPERRY, a drummer enters and goes R. He is a quiet, old-fashioned, pleasant-voiced man about 45. NAT crosses below the girls to door and holds it open for them.)

NAT. (*when JOSIE hands him dime*) Thank you very much. (*at door as GIRLS pass out*) Good afternoon, ladies. You'll call again, won't you? (*ANGIE goes out first*)

JOSIE. (*following ANGIE, giggling*) Thank you, I'm sure. (*SPERRY is looking NAT over*)

(*After GIRLS exeunt NAT closes the door and looks at money juggling it a bit and smiling. SPERRY comes down to R. of stove*)

SPERRY. Old Sam about?

NAT. (*near door*) No Mr. Graham isn't here at present.

SPERRY. Are you working here?

NAT. Yes sir.

SPERRY. Well, I'll be hanged!

NAT. (*after a pause*) Is there anything I can do for you?

SPERRY. No—n—thank you—just the same.

NAT. We have some fine, fresh drawn vanilla.

SPERRY. No, I don't buy from drug stores. I sell to them.

NAT. Oh!

SPERRY. (*hands NAT card*) My card! (*sits R. of stove*)

NAT. Mr. Sperry?

SPERRY. Yes, I don't make this town very often. Sothern and Lee are the only people I sell to here but I never miss a chance to chin awhile with old Sam and I had about ten minutes before train time.

NAT. Mr. Graham doesn't buy of you, then?
(*goes L. to counter*)

SPERRY. Don't buy of anybody, does he?

NAT. I don't know I've just come here.

SPERRY. Oh well, Sam's a nice old duffer but he ain't got no business sense. Everything's run down here. You can see for yourself and Sothern and Lee have got all the trade.

NAT. (*suddenly interested*) Don't you think Mr. Graham could get some of the trade if he was stocked up?

SPERRY. He'd get the biggest part of it.

NAT. Do you think so? (*comes over c.*)

SPERRY. Yes, I'm sure of it. (*nodding*) Everybody likes Sam you know. I talked to our people a little while ago about giving some more credit.

NAT. Yes.

SPERRY. But they wouldn't do a thing. You see he owes them a bill now that's so old it's got whiskers on it.

NAT. (*L. thoughtfully then turns*) How much is this old bill?

SPERRY. (*taking out note-book*) About fifty dollars, I think.

NAT. (*gets box from L. of stove and sits L. of SPERRY*) Suppose you told your firm that there's a young fellow here who'd like to give this store a

boom. Say he wants a little credit because—because Mr. Graham wouldn't allow him to put up any cash—

SPERRY. No, I'm afraid they wouldn't.

NAT. (*breaking in suddenly*) How much is this bill with the whiskers?

SPERRY. (*referring to invoice in book*) Forty-seven dollars and thirty cents.

NAT. Now suppose I pay that——

SPERRY. (*surprised*) Pay it? Do you really mean it?

NAT. Certainly I mean it. (*pulling out roll of bills and handling it so SPERRY sees several one hundred dollar bills*)

SPERRY. (*seeing money*) Quite a roll you're carrying.

NAT. No, only a trifle, a mere trifle. I don't take much cash around with me. Haven't for five years. (*pulls a \$50 bill from roll and holds it*) What do you think they'd say——

SPERRY. I guess you could have what you wanted in moderation. Can I give them your name?

NAT. Duncan. Nathaniel Duncan.

SPERRY. Any business connections?

NAT. None that I care to speak about.

SPERRY. Anyone you can refer them to?

NAT. (*after some thought*) Do you know L. J. Bartlett & Co.

SPERRY. The brokers? (NAT nods "yes") Do I know J. P. Morgan?

NAT. Well, let them inquire of Kellogg the junior partner? He knows me.

SPERRY. (*rising*) Kellogg! That's enough, if he says you're all right, you can have anything you want?

NAT. (*rising, hands SPERRY \$50 bill*) Here's fifty—(*turns away and picks up box*) That's funny. I couldn't do that for myself. (NAT puts box L. of stove again)

SPERRY. (*putting \$50 in pocket—taking out small bills and change and counting it*) No, I suppose such a small matter wouldn't interest you?

NAT. No, I suppose not.

SPERRY. (*handing NAT change*) Two-seventy. (*NAT puts change in his pocket*) Now, let me see, what do you want here?

NAT. What? (*SPERRY nods toward shelves. NAT goes L. thinking*) Oh, well, I want a lot of pills—and—(*seeing SPERRY smile at him*)—every thing for a regular drug store. Everything Sothevn & Lee carry and some things they don't, only all in small lots until I see what we sell.

SPERRY. If you'll leave it to me.

NAT. (*laughing*) That's a funny thing. That's just what I'm going to do. You know what we need here as well as I do, don't you?

SPERRY. Oh yes, indeed. I'll get up a list of all the things you'll want and have the goods shipped here to-morrow.

NAT. Splendid!

SPERRY. Well, I must be getting down to the depot. (*goes to door and meets GRAHAM, who is just coming in*) Why, hello, Sam, glad to see you. (*shaking hands*)

GRAHAM. Hello Sperry, how de do? I'm glad to see you too. This gentleman is Mr. Duncan.

SPERRY. Yes, we've been talking.

GRAHAM. Oh!

NAT. Mr. Sperry is going to stock us up here if you're willing. (*GRAHAM looks at him in great astonishment*) Are you?

GRAHAM. (*looks from one to the other*) But Sperry knows I'm not able to——

SPERRY. That's all right, Sam. Mr. Duncan has made me realize that if you've got the goods here you can sell 'em.

NAT. So he'll put in what we need and we'll pay for them as fast as we can.

(GRAHAM *with great feeling looking from one to the other, too overcome to say anything.*)

SPERRY. I'll get the goods right away, Sam, and I'll be around again next month— Good day, Mr. Duncan. So long, Sam. (*shaking hands heartily*) Congratulations, again. (*aside to GRAHAM*) That's a smart young man you got there. (*nodding knowingly toward NAT. Exits*)

GRAHAM. (*turning to NAT*) I don't know what to say to you, my boy, I don't know what to say.

NAT. (*turns*) Oh, it's nothing, sir.

GRAHAM. But how did you—

NAT. Oh, I just gave that drummer a little talk and he agreed to it.

GRAHAM. You're a wonderful business man—

NAT. I'll begin to believe that if you keep on saying it. What shall I do with this ten cents?

GRAHAM. What?

NAT. I sold some soda—

GRAHAM. Well, I declare!

NAT. Where's the cash drawer?

GRAHAM. Over there, behind the counter.

NAT. (*goes up behind counter, and holds coin over drawer*) Now listen! (*drops coin and as it jingles into drawer, both laugh, looking over the shelves*) I wish we could get some paint—these—shelves—

GRAHAM. Oh, that's easy enough—I've got some over at the house— That gentleman from New York is coming over right after dinner. I wonder if Betty—went home!

NAT. I think so.

GRAHAM. I'd like to tell her of this good fortune. Poor little girl; she felt pretty bad to-day because she didn't have a dress for Josie Lockwood's party.

NAT. (*putting hand in pocket. Stops and hastily withdraws it again as if he had burned his fingers, then as if speaking to his finger*) Keep away from

there. (*goes up L. Door opens quickly and PETE WILLING, SHERIFF, enters noisily, goes R. C.*)

PETE. Say, Sam, see here a minute!

(*NAT is up L. cleaning up.*)

GRAHAM. (*coming down R.*) Hello, Sheriff, how de do? Have a chair!

PETE. I'm sorry about this, Sam, but there ain't no use wastin' words about it, I'm here on business. You know you had a note due at the bank yesterday, don't you?

GRAHAM. Yes, but——

PETE. Well, it's protested and I'm here to serve the papers onto ye.

GRAHAM. Why, Pete? (*half dazed*) Oh, there must be some mistake, somewhere. I'll go over and see Mr. Lockwood. He'll arrange it for me, I'm sure. (*starts up to get hat*)

PETE. No, Mr. Lockwood don't want to see you unless you can settle.

(*NAT quickly feeling for the bills, in his pocket, starts down, stops C. Thinks a moment, slowly withdraws his hand, shakes his head and goes up again.*)

GRAHAM. (*coming down with hat*) Mr. Lockwood—said—he didn't want to see me.

PETE. That's just what he said and I got orders from him soon's I got judgment to close you up.

GRAHAM. (*near door R. smiling but lips trembling*) To—to turn me out of the store?

PETE. (*loud voice*) Now, there ain't no use whining about it. (*NAT starts down quickly*) Law is law and——

NAT. (*L. C. to PETE*) Wait! Are you laboring under the impression that Mr. Graham is deaf?

PETE. (*very loudly*) What!

NAT. He said "what." Did you hear it?

PETE. (*very loud*) What have you got to do with it?

NAT. I'll show you what I've got to do with it if you tell me the amount of that note.

PETE. (*after a pause and in lower key*) With interest and costs it figgers up three hundred and ninety dollars and eighty-two cents.

NAT. (*staring in horror*) Three hundred and ninety dollars?

PETE. (*loud again*) Yes, three hundred and ninety—dollars and say—you look ahere——

NAT. (*turning*) Here, listen, if there is anything else you've got to tell me go out in the middle of the street and tell me from there. (*puts his hand in his pocket and pulls out roll of bills so that the audience sees it, but not PETE and GRAHAM. He goes up to cash drawer and opens it*) Three hundred and ninety—(*he apparently gets the roll out of drawer. PETE is about to speak but seeing bills stops in great surprise. GRAHAM is dumbfounded at the sight. NAT comes down counting off one hundreds*) One, two, three, four. (*PETE backs up a bit with astonishment. Taking off his hat*) Four hundred, Mr. Sheriff. Will you kindly give me that note and the change and then place yourself on the other side of that door?

PETE. (*awed tone*) I ain't got the note with me.

NAT. Perhaps you'd better go over to the bank and get it.

PETE. (*going R. to door*) All right, I'll go and get it. Can I have the money?

NAT. (*coming toward him and holding out money and as he is about to take it*) Wait a minute—are you a regular Sheriff? (*PETE shows his badge*)

NAT. (*looks at it*) It's beautiful. (*gives him the bills and PETE looks at the bills and at NAT and then starts to door R.*)

PETE. (*as he gets near door, looks at money again. Exit slamming the door*) Well I'll be dommet!

[(GRAHAM watches NAT a moment, has been too dazed to interfere while PETE was there.)

GRAHAM. (*coming down L.*) Why, I can't allow you to do this, my boy——

NAT. (*cheerily*) Don't feel that way about it. It's done.

GRAHAM. I'll turn the store over to you if——

NAT. (*alarmed*) Oh, Lord no—please don't do that—(*going to GRAHAM R.*)

GRAHAM. Then I can't accept your great kindness, my boy, unless you think a partnership would——

NAT. That's the way to do it, a partnership. (*as GRAHAM is about to speak again*) Now don't say any more about it. Now you said, you had some paint. These shelves——

GRAHAM. Yes, at the house. I'll get it. (*almost breaking down*) If—if— Fate—or—something hadn't brought you here to-day I don't know what would have happened to Betty and me. Perhaps to a gentleman of your wealth, four hundred dollars don't mean much——

NAT. (*smiling*) No, nothing.

GRAHAM. To me it's meant everything. I only hope I can repay you some day. God bless you, my boy, God bless you. (*goes out R.*)

NAT. (*watches GRAHAM go out and then counts over the few dollars he has left, sadly, and returns them to his pocket*) Harry said I couldn't get rid of that stake in a year. He doesn't know what a fast town this is. (*he starts up as LOCKWOOD comes down past window. He sees LOCKWOOD*) Father-in-law—I must be a business man. (*goes up L. bus. of mixing bottles and boxes*)

LOCKWOOD. (*enters and goes L. C. sees NAT. Very genial manner*) You're Mr. Duncan, ain't you?

NAT. (*turns*) Yes, sir. (LOCKWOOD *looks at him familiarly. Coming down*) Oh, Mr. Lockwood, I believe?

LOCKWOOD. (*shaking hands*) Yes. I'm glad to meet you.

NAT. Thank you, sir.

LOCKWOOD. Pete Willin' was tellin' me you'd just took up this note of Graham's.

NAT. Yes, sir.

LOCKWOOD. Well, here's some change that's coming to you and if you'll have Sam step over to the Bank they'll give him the note.

NAT. (*taking out money*) Thank you, sir.

LOCKWOOD. I'm glad you're comin' in here with Sam.

NAT. (*ministerial manner*) It's only temporary. I am devoting much of my time to my studies but I feel that I should be earning something too.

LOCKWOOD. That's right—you always go to church, don't you?

NAT. No, sir, only Sundays.

LOCKWOOD. That's what I mean. Do you drink?

NAT. (*working upper counter*) Oh, no, sir. Don't drink, smoke or swear and on Sundays I go to church. Dress quietly but neatly—don't accept invitations to—(*turning to LOCKWOOD*)

LOCKWOOD. I'm mighty glad to hear it. I'm at the head of the temperance movement here and I hope you'll join us— Set an example to our fast young men.

NAT. (*sweeping up R.*) Yes, I'm sure I can set an example to them.

LOCKWOOD. (*looks about for some little way to show his friendship*) Warm to-day. (*takes off hat and fans himself*)

NAT. Yes, sir, very.

LOCKWOOD. I believe I'll have a glass of soda.

NAT. Yes, sir, certainly. (*goes behind counter L.*)

LOCKWOOD. (*at counter L.*) I suppose you'll fix this place up some, eh?

NAT. Oh, yes—we'll try to have the best drug store in the State, would you like vanilla?

LOCKWOOD. (*at the counter*) No, just soda. (*for the first time NAT sees wink from LOCKWOOD'S affected eye*)

NAT. (*looks at him, unable to believe his eyes*) I beg pardon?

LOCKWOOD. (*winking again*) I say, just plain—soda.

NAT. On the level?

LOCKWOOD. What? (*winks again*)

NAT. I understand. (*gets whiskey bottle, turns out drink and fills it with soda*)

LOCKWOOD. (*takes a couple of swallows and smacks his lips, then drinks it all*) How can anyone want intoxicating liquors when they can get such a bracin' drink as this? (*NAT turns and picks up bottle and smells of it to make sure it's whiskey*)

NAT. I pass. (*LOCKWOOD putting a nickel on counter for drink—goes down L. C. NAT looks at it*) Ten cents more, please.

LOCKWOOD. What for?

NAT. Plain soda. (*winks*)

LOCKWOOD. Not much. Oh, I guess you're joking. (*down L. C. laughing*) Well, good luck to you, Mr. Duncan. Oh, say, you must come and see us some time.

NAT. Thank you very much, sir. (*coming down*) I had the pleasure of seeing your daughter in here a few moments ago. She is a charming girl.

LOCKWOOD. (*gratified*) I'm real glad you think so. She's taken a great shine to you, too; seeing you at church. Come around and get acquainted. You're the sort of a young feller I'd like to have her know. (*looking NAT over*) Good day! (*crosses R. toward door, winks*)

NAT. Good day and thank you again.

LOCKWOOD. (*stops at door and turning to NAT*)
Good-bye. (*winks again*)

NAT. (*mistaking the wink*) That's all right. I won't say anything about it. (*after LOCKWOOD has gone NAT counts over his stake again, going L. Goes up behind counter. Resuming work of cleaning up. GRAHAM with paint and brushes enters with BURNHAM*)

BURNHAM. (*as he is coming in*) Yes, that's my business. Sometimes I've bought odd no-account things that have made me a lot of money and more times they never amount to anything, but that burner you got sort of struck my fancy.

GRAHAM. Oh, the gas arrangement?

BURNHAM. Yes. Such a curious idea I kind a took to it. It's patented ain't it?

GRAHAM. Yes, sir.

(*NAT listens.*)

BURNHAM. Want to sell the patent?

GRAHAM. Why yes, if you think it is worth anything.

BURNHAM. (*going to burner R.*) Well, it might be sometime and then again it might not. I was thinking at dinner, I'd like to own that burner and I made out a little bill of sale and says I to myself: "If Graham will take Five hundred dollars for that thing," says I, "I'll give it to him, spot cash, right in his hand." Says I. (*taking paper and bills out*)

GRAHAM. (*L. C.*) Five hundred dollars!

(*NAT is watching them.*)

BURNHAM. (*R. C.*) Yes, five hundred—cash (*coming down*) I guess you don't know it but I heard at the Bank they wasn't going to extend the

time on that note of yours and I thought this five hundred would come in handy and I wanted to help you out.

GRAHAM. Well, that is kind of you, sir—everybody's being good to me to-day or else I'm dreaming.

BURNHAM. Then it's a bargain?

GRAHAM. Well, I hope you won't lose anything by it, Mr. Burnham. (*NAT forms the word "BURNHAM" with his lips but makes no sound, trying to remember where he heard the name*) Making gas from crude oil——

NAT. (*remembering the name, etc.*) Gas from—by Jove!

GRAHAM. May come in handy in some places.

(*NAT comes down to L.*)

NAT. Mr. Graham, is this patent of yours for getting gas from crude oil?

(*BURNHAM looks up frowning.*)

GRAHAM. Why yes, a burner that——

NAT. I wouldn't sell it just yet, if I were you.

BURNHAM. (*crossing to NAT, angrily*) What are you butting into this for?

NAT. Because I'm a business Man—if you don't believe it, ask him. (*indicating GRAHAM*)

GRAHAM. He has a perfect right to, Mr. Burnham.

BURNHAM. You haven't got any objections to him getting this money, have you?

NAT. No, but I want to look into the matter first.

BURNHAM. What for?

NAT. Well, I have an idea you wouldn't offer five hundred dollars for this burner unless you expected to make something out of it and I think it ought to be worth as much to Mr. Graham as it is to you.

BURNHAM. Aw, you don't know what you're talking about.

NAT. I know that, but I happen to know you are promoting a scheme for making gas from crude oil and you won't get this burner until I have consulted my friend, Henry Kellogg about it.

BURNHAM. (*surprised*) Henry Kellogg?

NAT. Yes, of L. J. Bartlett & Co.

BURNHAM. Oh, well, if you're representing Kellogg, I've got nothing to say, only why the devil did he send you here?

NAT. I am ashamed to tell you. Better ask him.

BURNHAM. That's what I will do the moment I see him and you can bet on that.

NAT. No, I can't, I'm not allowed to gamble.

BURNHAM. (*angry and disgusted*) Oh, there's no use talking to you—(*crossing R.*) But I'll see you again, Mr. Graham. (*stopping in door, to GRAHAM*) You take my tip and don't do any business with that fellow until you find out who he is. (*exit around window*)

NAT. (*GRAHAM stands and watches BURNHAM out*) All that may have sounded queer to you, sir, but I'm not here to beat you out of your invention.

GRAHAM. (*sincerely, coming to NAT*) There's nothing on earth my boy that could make me think you are——

NAT. Thank you——

GRAHAM. But five hundred dollars would have paid you for taking up my note—and I could have bought Betty a dress for the party but I'm sure you have done what is best——

BETTY. (*entering R.*) Mr. Lockwood wants to see you over at the bank, father. (*begins cleaning up by the work bench*)

NAT. Oh, yes, he's got that note for you.

GRAHAM. (*getting his hat*) Oh, yes, that note, I'll go right over there. I never had so many things

happen to me in one day before in all my life. (*exit*)

NAT. (*watches BETTY working a moment, then counts his stake again*) I might as well be broke as the way I am. Miss Graham! (*she comes down to him R.*) Could you get a party dress for thirty-two dollars?

BETTY. (*surprised*) Thirty-two dollars.

NAT. And eighty cents.

BETTY. Heavens I should think so.

NAT. Then go ahead. (*BETTY looks at him*) I'll stake you—(*offers her money*)

BETTY. Oh, no.

NAT. Please do as a favor to me.

BETTY. Oh, I couldn't take it.

NAT. Yes, you can.

BETTY. No, I can't. Thank you ever so much just the same.

NAT. But I want you to go to that party.

BETTY. You're awful kind—but I don't care to go now.

NAT. Don't care to? You insisted upon it a little while ago.

BETTY. Yes, I know; but I've been thinking over what you said to me since then and I know I'd be out of place there—I belong here with father, working in the store. (*goes over to counter L. starting to work*) and I guess folks is better off if they stay where they belong——

(*She glances at NAT, then returns to her work. She takes cloth and wipes counter. NAT stands R. C. watching her intently. TRACEY appears behind window coming from U. C. He beckons off L. and FOUR girls appear from C. one after the other and look at NAT through the window as TRACEY points him out to them. At the same time FOUR girls appear behind window U. R. from down R. JOSIE, ANGIE and ROLAND also appear at window R. C. and HI and WATTY*)

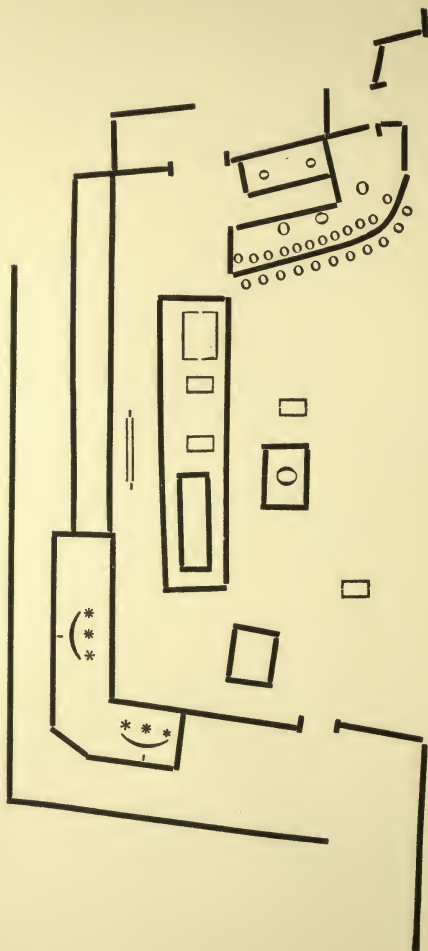
appear at window up R. and look at NAT. During the time these people appear NAT has been watching BETTY but now turns up stage, sees crowd watching him, stops a moment in amazement, then grabs the broom which is at work bench R. and begins sweeping furiously.)

CURTAIN.

(2nd CURTAIN. TRACEY, ANGIE, JOSIE and ROLAND still at the window. HI and WATTY in the doorway R. NAT and BETTY behind the counter. BETTY up stage and NAT down stage. The 8 girls swarming about the soda fountain, giggling and vainly asking for soda. NAT trying to wait on them all at once, BETTY trying to help him.)

(3rd CURTAIN. Principals in a line down stage. NAT in the C. BETTY at his R. GRAHAM on his L. The eight girls up C. forming a second line.)

ACT III.



ACT III.

Same as ACT 2—A month later. Tile flooring. Up R. is a large bay window with two chandeliers—three electric lights on each. In the window are large signs advertising different candies and medicines, etc. A large red and blue bottle (usually used in drug store windows). Also a red and blue stand light (electric) used to heighten the color of the bottles. Down R. is a double door leading into street, with brass handles. Up R. is Tabard Inn Library book case filled with books. The whole of the back wall is used for shelves filled with bottles of the usual prescription medicines and also various patent medicines and tooth powder, talcum powder, etc. A ladder against these shelves, one practical half filled bottle on shelf in reaching distance of ladder. Up L. is door leading into prescription room. L. is large and beautiful soda fountain and counter, a couple of electric stand lights on top of fountain and cards all around fountain advertising the different drinks, etc. On counter is rack filled with bottles, all filled with different flavors and several dishes with crushed fruit and a dish of eggs. Nice holders polished brightly and high stools all around counter. A counter up C. with cigar case with different cigars and cigarettes, etc. On top of case, a lighter. On R. of this counter is a display of various Mdse. in the center of counter a roll stand with two sizes of wrapping paper. C. and just below the counter

is a little desk with telephone and telephone books and chair. Upper end of soda counter is a cash register. Several electric signs on center counter, another chair R. Center L. is a door with office painted on it in gold letters. 2 large arc lights hanging from the ceilings. Through window is seen same backing as Act II. Moonlight effect outside—lights in windows and in street lamps.

AT RISE:—BOY *is going over a lot of packages to be delivered. TRACEY is at the telephone.*

(TRACEY is well dressed in this act.)

TRACEY. No, mam. Mr. Duncan won't get here till after Thursday evenin' meetin'—'bout twenty minutes. Oh, yes'm, he's allus at church if there's anythin' goin' on there. They're comin' right over. Boy's jest startin' with 'em. Yes 'em—g-bye! *(hangs up receiver. To Boy)* Got everything, Herman.

HERMAN. Yep!

TRACEY. Take these packages to Miss Lyman's first; she's been telephonin' fer them. When you git 'em all delivered, go home an' go to bed. You want to git here by six in the mornin'.

HERMAN. I'll be here all right, all right! G'night! *(exits with arm full of packages)*

(TRACEY put a few things on the counter, straight. Goes up behind soda counter, takes off his white coat and puts on street coat.)

(ANGIE enters L. comes to C. TRACEY sees her.)

TRACEY. *(brightenig)* Hello!

ANGIE. (C.) Ready?

TRACEY. No, Mr. Graham ain't back yet.

ANGIE. (*turns and goes R.*) Guess I won't wait.

TRACEY. (*disappointed*) Aw why? He'll be here pretty quick.

ANGIE. Nat's at meetin' ain't he?

TRACEY. A course!

ANGIE. Then, he'll come up by here takin' Josie Lockwood home.

TRACEY. What if he will?

ANGIE. (*goes up*) I don't want him to think I'm chasing after you!

TRACEY. He won't. (*hesitating*) 'Cause—'cause he knows all about us!

ANGIE. Knows all about us!

TRACEY. (*looking away*) Yep!

ANGIE. How?

TRACEY. (*uneasily*) I told him!

ANGIE. (*with surprise and anger*) You did?—Well, I——

TRACEY. Oh, don't get mad, Angie. You see when he first came here, every one of you girls was always hangin' around after him.

ANGIE. Why Tracey Tanner!

TRACEY. Oh, yes, you wuz too. The hull crowd of you, an' you know it! An' I was afraid he might git stuck on you too, an' so—I asked him not to.

ANGIE. Well of all things!

TRACEY. I couldn't help it. You don't know how I felt.

ANGIE. Did you tell *him* how you felt?

TRACEY. Yep! I didn't 'tend to, but he spoke so nice, and I was feelin' so strong that it all came out 'afore I thought.

ANGIE. What did you say to him?

TRACEY. I told him you was the best lookin' girl in town.

ANGIE. (*simpering*) The idea!

TRACEY. Well, by gosh, you are, all right! And

I told him please to let you alone and pick out any one o' the others.

ANGIE. What'd he say?

TRACEY. (*with a sheepish little laugh*) He said he guessed I was stuck on you.

ANGIE. He did?

TRACEY. Well not them words, but that's what it meant.

ANGIE. What were the words?

TRACEY. He said: "It strikes me, my boy, that you— Oh—you know."

ANGIE. No—what?

TRACEY. (*front*) "That you—love her."

ANGIE. (*looking at TRACEY*) What did you say?

TRACEY. I said I did, but I didn't stand much chance, 'cause you was so swell an' I worked in Pa's Livery Stable and was fat!

ANGIE. Oh, Tracey! (*laughs*) What *did he say* to that?

TRACEY. He says, "Nonsense, if you want her and will follow the rules I give you, it's a cinch."

ANGIE. (*turning R.*) I think it is all perfectly horrid!

TRACEY. (*goes close to her*) Aw, please don't be mad, Angie. You see he was right. When I got dressed up like he told me and started goin' to your church regular, you began lettin' me come to see you for th' first time.

(*There is a noise at the door. ANGIE springs away from TRACEY. SAM GRAHAM and SPERRY, the drummer, enter R. They have met at the door.*)

GRAHAM. (*as they enter*) Nat got a note from you yesterday.

SPERRY. Yes, I wrote him I was coming. Never stayed over night here before.

GRAHAM. Well, have a chair. (*SPERRY takes the chair*) I'm a little late, I guess, Tracey.

TRACEY. (*getting hat*) Oh, that's all right.

(SPERRY crosses L. looks around. ANGIE crosses R. toward door.)

GRAHAM. (*seeing ANGIE*) Why, hello, Angie. Goin' to see that Tracy gets home safe?

TRACEY. No, she was passin' and I got her to wait for me. (*crossing R.*) We both go the same way and don't neither of us like walkin' alone.

GRAHAM. (*smiling*) That's right, Tracey, that's the way to look at it.

TRACEY. G'night.

ANGIE. Good-night, Mr. Graham. } (*spoken together*)

GRAHAM. (*genially*) Good-night. Better take a little candy with you, Tracey.

TRACEY. (*at door*) I got some. (TRACEY and ANGIE exit R.)

SPERRY. Will Mr. Duncan get around again to-night?

GRAHAM. Oh, yes. This is prayer meeting night. It's the only night he lets me come here. He's so afraid I'll do too much work. I guess it disturbs his sleep!

SPERRY. (*looking around*) The store looks different to you, don't it, Sam?

GRAHAM. The whole world looks different to me since he came. There's no one like that boy on this earth, sir, no one!

SPERRY. It was a fine thing for you to get him. How did he happen to come her? (*sitting L.*)

GRAHAM. I don't know. Lord sent him, I reckon.

SPERRY. Then he's never told.

GRAHAM. No, and I've never asked him. He said once he was trying a new method for getting rich. (*sitting at counter*)

SPERRY. (*laughing*) He picked out a curious town to try it.

GRAHAM. (*smiling*) That's what I told him, but he said "It's the best kind of a place if you know the system?" (*becomes serious*) But he's wonderful, Sperry. He reduces the debt here every month; there isn't a more comfortable house in town than the one Nat rented and fixed up for us and he's sent Betty to a fine school——

SPERRY. Sent your daughter to School?

GRAHAM. Yes, she's been gone six months. Comes home for her first vacation to-morrow. You know Sperry—(*rising*) I feel toward Nat as I would toward a son, and no boy could be more devoted to a father than he is to me.

(*The door R. opens and BETTY enters. She is dressed in a simple but very smart traveling costume and the contrast in her appearance from ACT II must be startling. She is pretty, shapely, and most attractive. Her manner shows her school training.*)

BETTY. Father!

GRAHAM. (*crossing to BETTY*) Why, Betty, my little girl! (*they embrace*) We expected you to-morrow. (*takes grip from BETTY*)

BETTY. I found I could get here on the evening train and I just couldn't wait.

GRAHAM. This is Mr. Sperry, Betty.

BETTY. (*crosses L.*) How de do, Mr. Sperry.

SPERRY. (*shaking her hand*) How de do? I guess I used to see you around here, didn't I?

BETTY. Yes—when I was the head clerk.

SPERRY. Well, you've—er—grown—since then. I congratulate you.

BETTY. (*smiling a little*) Thank you.

SPERRY. (*getting bag*) Well, I'll step over to the Radville House and get a room, and come back a little later and see Mr. Duncan. He'll know if there's anything you want, won't he?

GRAHAM. Oh, yes, he attends to all that.

SPERRY. I'll run in to see you a moment in the morning. Good-night.

GRAHAM. Yes, do. Good-night.

BETTY. Good-night, Mr. Sperry.

SPERRY. Good-night. (*exits R.*)

GRAHAM. Well, well, well, my little Betty! My own little girl— My eyes but it's nice to have you home! (*holds her off at arm's length—and looks at her*) Why you look beautiful!

BETTY. Oh! Father!

GRAHAM. You're just as pretty as a picture.

BETTY. (*laughs*) Oh, father!

GRAHAM. Yes, siree—you are! I can't hardly believe it—it's a wonderful change—wonderful!

BETTY. (*laughing*) Did I use to be very ugly before?

GRAHAM. Oh, no, no—but all this fixing up shows you off so well.

BETTY. Yes, I know—it does make a difference, doesn't it? Where's Nat? (*looks around store*)

GRAHAM. This is Thursday.

BETTY. Oh, of course, prayer meeting?

GRAHAM. (*patting her*) Now, I know why you were so set on getting home to-night. I wasn't the magnet—it was Nat you wanted to see.

BETTY. No—nonsense— I wanted to see you both.

GRAHAM. But, you want to see Nat very much?

BETTY. Why, everyone wants to see their friends when they've been away, don't they?

GRAHAM. Yes, indeed! That's natural enough.

BETTY. Certainly it is. And then Nat has helped us so!

GRAHAM. And you only want to see him on account of what he's done for us?

BETTY. No—no—not *only*—that, but that's one reason.

GRAHAM. And the other reason is that you like him a little?

BETTY. (*trying to take it from a friendship point of view*) I like him more than a little—I—I, oh, father!

GRAHAM. (*taking her in his arms*) It's all right, Betty. It's all right. You can't like him—too much! He's honest and true and the more you care for him the better I shall be pleased!

BETTY. (*suddenly*) Why—has—has—he spoken to you about me?

GRAHAM. He speaks of you nearly every day.

BETTY. Oh, does he? But I mean—does he speak in a—a—what does he say about me?

GRAHAM. (*smiling happily*) Well, perhaps he'll tell you that himself.

(TRACEY enters R. *He comes in scowling but as he catches sight of BETTY, his expression changes to one of open-eyed wonder.*)

BETTY. (*holding out hand*) How do you do, Tracey? I'm glad to see you.

TRACEY. Gosh! How'd you do it?

BETTY. (*with a little laugh*) Do what?

TRACEY. (*embarrassed*) I dunno, but you look great! (*shakes hands*)

BETTY. Thank you, Tracey, I'm glad you think so.

GRAHAM. I thought you'd quit for the night, Tracey.

TRACEY. (*his troubles coming back to him. Crosses to counter L.*) So I had! But Angie just heard Betty was here and made me come down to see if you wanted me to work to-night.

GRAHAM. Well, that was thoughtful now, very thoughtful. Have you had supper, Betty?

BETTY. (*looking around store, going L.*) No, but I'm not a bit hungry really.

GRAHAM. Oh, but you must have your supper! Come right over to the house and Miss Carpenter'll get you something.

BETTY. All right, if you say so. How perfectly splendid the store looks Tracey, doesn't it?

TRACEY. (*at counter*) You bet! And wait'll you see the house!

GRAHAM. You'd hardly know the place, since Nat fixed it up. I declare I can't realize you're here!

BETTY. (*laughing*. GRAHAM *takes up bag*) You will in time. (*coming down*)

GRAHAM. Well, come along. If you don't have supper before Nat gets home, you won't eat any at all.

BETTY. (*going to door*) Tell Mr. Duncan I'm gone. Won't you Tracey?

TRACEY. Oh, sure!

(*Enter JOSIE LOCKWOOD and ROLAND BARNETT.*)

BETTY. How do you do, Josie? (*JOSIE looks at BETTY in astonishment*) Good evening, Mr. Barnett!

ROLAND. Why, if it ain't Betty Graham!

JOSIE. How'd do!

ROLAND. Well school ain't done you any harm!

BETTY. I didn't expect it would. How have you been, Josie?

JOSIE. Real well, thanks. When did you get back?

BETTY. I've just come from the station.

JOSIE. (*looking about the store*) Did you come from the train alone?

BETTY. (*understands*. *Crosses to door R.*) Yes. Nat didn't know I was coming.

JOSIE. Then you haven't see him yet?

BETTY. Not yet. Perhaps he's at the house now. Come along, father. We'll go and see. Good-night, good-night, Tracey.

JOSIE. G'night!

ROLAND. G'night!

TRACEY. So long!

} (*nearly together*)

GRAHAM. Good-night! (*BETTY and GRAHAM exit*)

ROLAND. A pack of sweets, Tracey. What do you think of Betty Graham bein' rigged up like that?

JOSIE. (*at door looking after BETTY*) She looks out of place in it. That's the trouble of dressing up girls that aren't used to it.

ROLAND. I wonder if Nat Duncan will believe that?

JOSIE. (*much annoyed*) It will probably please him!

ROLAND. (*turning*) Sure it will! Because he likes her pretty well!

JOSIE. (*angrily*) It's no such thing! She looked so horrid he didn't like to have her around the store and so he sent her away to have her taught something.

ROLAND. (*seeing that he has gone too far*) Tracey, we want some soda. (*going toward counter*)

(*The door of the Conversation Parlor opens a little and NAT'S head shows for a moment in the doorway, then goes back.*)

TRACEY. What flavor, Josie?

JOSIE. Didn't Mr. Duncan come over here from meeting? (*ROLAND glances angrily at her, crossing at C.*)

TRACEY. Nope!

(*NAT'S head disappears and door closes quietly.*)

JOSIE. Is he at the house?

TRACEY. I don't believe so.

ROLAND. What do you care where he is?

JOSIE. I don't. But I can ask if I want to, can't I? I wanted to speak to him about choir rehearsal, that's all.

TRACEY. What flavor did you say?

JOSIE. (*starts R.*) I don't think I want *any*! I've got a headache!

ROLAND. Oh, come on!

JOSIE. (*going R.*) No, I don't care for any, honestly—I'm going home!

ROLAND. Goin' to stop at Sam Graham's?

JOSIE. (*turns to ROLAND*) No, I'm not—I don't feel well—and *I'm going home*.

ROLAND. I'll go with you.

(TRACEY *turns up L. busies himself with putting articles in show cases.*)

JOSIE. (*turns R.*) Oh, no, don't trouble. I know the way.

ROLAND. What's the matter, Josie? I used to see you home Thursday nights always, but somehow I never do now. I haven't since Nat—well, not for a long time. Why is it?

JOSIE. I'm sure I don't know.

ROLAND. You've no objections?

JOSIE. (*crossly*) Why no, certainly not!

ROLAND. Well, then come on.

JOSIE. (*as ROLAND opens the door for her*) I don't want to take you out of your way.

ROLAND. Never you mind about that! (*exit ROLAND and JOSIE R.*)

NAT. (*enters cautiously from parlor*) Are you quite alone, Tracey?

During the following scene, NAT must play so that it is quite clear that he is not in earnest.

TRACEY. (*whirling in surprise*) Where did you come from?

NAT. (*going to desk*) Through the back window.

TRACEY. You jest missed seein' Josie. (*going down L. looking at door*)

NAT. Heavens! What a blow!

(NAT *begins a busy inspection of stock, making notes of articles needed on shelves and in show-cases, during scene.*)

TRACEY. (*watches NAT keenly a moment, in deep thought*) Say, Nat did you sneak in that way because Roland was takin' Josie home?

NAT. No, Tracey, it was because he *wasn't* taking her home.

TRACEY. Yes, he was too, and is yet.

NAT. You don't tell me.

TRACEY. Yep! But—(*confidentially and reassuringly*) that needn't upset *you* none!

NAT. Thank you for those words. You're a true friend! (*going through door behind counter L.*)

TRACEY. You ain't a foolin' me, are you?

NAT. Why should I?

TRACEY. You're so cur'us. I don't never know when you mean what you're sayin' or not.

NAT. Oh, don't say that.

TRACEY. (*going up R. of desk*) I ain't the only one says it. Everybody in town says they don't understand you.

NAT. (*impressively, laying hand on TRACEY'S shoulder*) Tracey, nothing in life is harder to bear than not being understood.

TRACEY. (*after regarding NAT wonderingly*) Then why the hell don't you talk so folks'll know what it's about?

NAT. (*sitting at desk*) Because—because Tracey I'm living here according to rules.

TRACEY. (*shakes head hopelessly and resumes*) Say Nat, you treated me somethin' great once.

NAT. I haven't treated anybody since I've been here. I'm on the wagon.

TRACEY. I mean when I told you about me and Angie.

NAT. Oh! It's working, is it?

TRACEY. (*crosses L.*) Yep! Workin' immense! And I'd like to help you the same way if I could.

NAT. (*stops and regards him*) You would?

TRACEY. You're right, I would! And perhaps I can tell you something that will.

NAT. (*dramatically*) Speak, I beg!

TRACEY. You—er—you're tryin' to court Josie Lockwood, ain't ye?

NAT. Well that's a secret, Tracey!

TRACEY. All right, only if you are, she's yourn.

NAT. Just how do you figure that out? (*turning and looking at TRACEY*)

TRACEY. Oh, I could tell to-night when she was in here with Roland, she was a lookin' for you and when she seen you wasn't here, she wouldn't wait for no soda nor nothin'. Said she was feelin' awful for no soda nor nothin'. Said she was feelin' awful and going home. Roland went with her but she didn't want him to.

NAT. Harry's right. There's nothing to it. (*writing*)

TRACEY. Who's Harry?

NAT. A friend of mine. Tracey you want to get married, don't you?

TRACEY. Gosh! I should smile! But I can't afford it yet.

NAT. It's a contrary world, Tracey. A contrary world.

TRACEY. Why? Don't you want to?

NAT. Well no, I don't think I do.

TRACEY. Well you don't have to if you don't want to, do you?

NAT. Yes, if the girl asks me I've got to.

TRACEY. (*going behind cigar counter*) Aw you're foolin'. Oh, say, Betty's home.

NAT. (*turning*) Betty!

TRACEY. Yep, on the six-fifty. She's over to the house having supper. That's why I'm working to-night, so's you and Mr. Graham needn't stay.

NAT. (*rising*) Why, this is one of your Angie—evenings, isn't it?

TRACEY. Yes, but you'll want to see Betty won't you?

NAT. Oh, there'll be time enough for that after I close up. Go ahead and keep your date.

TRACEY. (*quickly*) Can I? (*taking book from NAT, and getting hat through door behind counter*)

NAT. Certainly, run along. Take Angie over to see Betty.

TRACEY. Thanks. (*starts for door R.*) If Angie asks you about it, tell her you said I could go, will ye?

NAT. Yes, I'll tell her. Remember what I told you now. Don't make love too much, let *her* do that.

(TRACEY stops at door.)

TRACEY. That's the hardest rule of all for me. G'night.

NAT. Good night. (TRACEY exits R. Phone bell rings—*Listening to bell*) Oh, Lord, Josie. (*he goes to phone, takes receiver and speaks with imitation of TRACEY's voice*) Hello! Yep, he's here but he's turrible busy, who's this? Who? Josie Lockwood. Oh, all right, sure, he'll speak to *you*. Wait a minute. (*he pauses long enough to have it appear that he has been called to the phone, then speaks in natural voice pleasantly*) Hello! Hello! Josie—what? Why I came right over here from church. Yes, I know you were—with Roland—Tracey told me. Because you were talking to him, so I didn't wait. Well I couldn't know that could I? How? I say how could I tell you didn't prefer to have him see you

home? (*makes a wry face, as if it were an effort to say it*) No, I can't possibly to-night. I'm all alone here. What? Oh, no, he isn't. I just sent him home—yes—no, that isn't the reason. I know she is, but I haven't seen her yet. No, I haven't, really. (*as if speaking to some one in the store*) Good evening sir—I'll attend to you in just a minute—pardon me—(*into phone*) What did you say? Oh well, yes, rather busy, yes all right, good bye.

(*Hangs up phone and shakes his fist at it—then goes L. Enter HARRY KELLOGG R. He stands just inside the door, looking at NAT. NAT is dumfounded.*)

HARRY. Well! Old Doctor Duncan!

NAT. Harry! (*rushes to him and grabs him. They embrace each other and slap each other on back*)

HARRY. Nat!

NAT. What the devil are you doing here?

HARRY. Business and other things. (*shaking hands violently*) Well old fellow, how are you

NAT. Sh—h—listen, I'm a business man! Pipe my store.

HARRY. (*looking about, crossing L.*) Gad, I'm blowed, if it ain't true! I couldn't believe half your letters. Who could?

NAT. Who could? Ask any of the natives. Ask Blinky Lockwood who owns the whole country.

HARRY. He's to be your father-in-law and might be prejudiced. By the way, I've got to see him to-night.

NAT. See Blinky! You never told *me* you knew him.

HARRY. I don't. This is for the firm, we are going to do some business for him. He wired me to come to the house, but I shan't stay there—after

I've seen him I'll come back here and go to the hotel. I'm going to hang around here a couple of days with you.

NAT. Good! But none of that hotel stuff. I'll put you up. Do it in style too.

HARRY. Well, how is my scheme coming on? Are you carrying out all the rules according to agreement?

NAT. Every rule. Not a drink, not a smoke and not a swear, and the church thing—well I own it, that's all.

HARRY. Bully for you! Well? Was I right?

NAT. I should say you were! It's so easy it seems a shame to do it.

HARRY. (*up L. c. sitting on telephone desk*) Good! I knew it. And you made a play for Lockwood's daughter, eh?

NAT. Certainly not! You're forgetting your instructions. I allowed her to make a play for me.

HARRY. Of course. My mistake—how far has it gone? Has she won you yet? Are you engaged?

NAT. No, I've got two months yet. (*going R. to book case*)

HARRY. So you have. There's no hurry. Let her take her time.

NAT. (*sitting on chair R. c.*) It's worse than that. It's got to a place where I have to dodge her now.

HARRY. Splendid. Only don't carry the dodging too far.

NAT. Do you really want me to carry out the rest of the agreement?

HARRY. Most certainly I do. Why not?

NAT. Well, when you proposed the scheme I was down and three times out, and willing to take a chance at anything, no matter how contemptible. Now it's different.

HARRY. Good Heavens! You don't mean you'd be willing to live here.

NAT. I don't know. I think I'm beginning to like it.

HARRY. (*rises*) Spend your life here with nobody around you but a bunch of rubes, slaving away in this measly store.

NAT. (*vehemently rising*) Hold on now, don't you call this a "measly store." There ain't a finer drug store in the State.

HARRY. Is it possible that this is Nat Duncan? The fellow who hated work and couldn't earn a living. Gad, I've arrived just in time. (*moving L.*)

NAT. (R.) In time for what?

HARRY. To set you straight. Here's the heiress you came to get, ready and anxious; everything coming your way and you're half inclined to back out.

(HARRY *sits on chair L. of desk with back to desk, and NAT on desk behind him.*)

NAT. See here, Harry, when I first landed here I had about as gay and sociable a time as a bell buoy in the ocean. (HARRY *laughs*) I nearly died for something to do and someone to talk to. Then I got in with this old Prince Graham, and for the first time in my life I was glad to work, to take my mind off the dullness. There was next to nothing in this store—and Graham and his daughter hadn't a penny. It was so peculiar finding someone that was worse off than I was that I used up all the coin you advanced me straightening them out.

HARRY. Yes, you wrote me about that.

NAT. Then I got dead interested trying to make the store amount to something and I never was so happy in my life, as when it began to show a profit. I realized things were easier for the old man and I found by scrimping a little we could send the girl to school. She was well worth it you know and——

HARRY. Oho! So that's the idea. (*rising and going down a bit*)

NAT. No—no—no—not at all. Only she—well, she's a nice little girl, Harry, just needed a chance in life, that's all. (*slight pause*)

HARRY. Go on.

NAT. Well, since I've been working here—I've stuck to all the terms of our agreement. Singled out this Lockwood girl and worked all the degrees. Didn't say much, no love-making but let her catch me looking sadly at her once in a while.

HARRY. That's the way!

NAT. Yes, that's the way. But the longer I keep it up, the *meaner* I feel. I'm getting along on my own account now and——

HARRY. And you want to back out?

NAT. (*going to him*) I want you to agree to let me out. These rubes, as you call them struck me as being nothing but a lot of jay freaks at first, but when you get to know them they are just as human as city people. I *like 'em* now and on the level I'm getting kind of stuck on church. And as for *work*, why I *eat* it up. (NAT *turns*)

HARRY. (L. c. *foot on chair*) Nat, my poor crazy friend, listen to me. This working and helping Graham is all very noble and fine and I'm glad you've done it, this drug store is a monument to your business ability; but come on down to earth now. This place is paying a little profit, very good, that's all it will ever do. It's all new to you and you're having the time of your life finding out you're good for something. But, from now it will get stale; and before long you'll hate it and next you'll hate the *town*, and then you'll be right where you were before. Now I'm going to hold you to your bargain for your own sake. (*goes to NAT*) If you're stuck on the town and the store you can keep right on just as well after you are married, but if you're not—you've got a fortune to do what you like with. Ah, don't—don't let this chance slip now on your life!

NAT. (R. C.) But think of the injustice to the girl! From the way I've been living, she thinks I'm closely related to the Saints.

HARRY. Well, if you think you are taking a mean advantage on that account—when she proposes to you, tell her everything about yourself. Just the sort of chap you've been; and if she wants to back out, I will have nothing to say. (*crosses L. turns up stage*)

NAT. (*going up R. C.*) Well, a bargain's a bargain. I gave you my word of honor I'd go through with this thing and I'll stick to it, but I tell you now, I don't like it.

HARRY. Yes, I know that's the way you feel now but sometimes you'll come to me and say, "Harry if you'd let me back out of that agreement. I'd never have forgiven you."

NAT. (*dubiously*) All right! I suppose you know best.

HARRY. You can bet I do! Now I'll go and see the man who's making money for you. (*crosses R. to door*)

NAT. (*coming down*) Oh say, how is that patent burner getting on?

HARRY. Our lawyers are still working on it. The Modern Gas Co. seems like a big thing. They've got a burner that does the trick all right, but if we find out it's an infringement on Graham's patent, we'll put a crimp in them. How much of it do you own?

NAT. It's all Mr. Graham's.

HARRY. All Graham's, and you wrote me as if it was everything in the world to you? (*going to NAT*) You're still far from a business man Nat.

NAT. I suppose so. (*enter JOSIE R. NAT continues quickly*) Why, good evening, may I present my friend, Mr. Kellogg? (*HARRY crosses to JOSIE*)

JOSIE. (*offering hand*) Pleased to meet you, I'm sure.

HARRY. (*shaking hands*) Charmed! Is this Miss Josephine Lockwood?

NAT. Yes. THE Miss Lockwood?

HARRY. I've heard of you, Miss Lockwood.

JOSIE. (*laughing uneasily*) Is that so?

HARRY. Yes. I'm on my way to your house now to meet your father.

JOSIE. (*realizing*) Oh yes, Mr. Kellogg, of course; he's waiting for you.

HARRY. Is he? Well I'll soon put a stop to that. (*going to door*)

JOSIE. Do you know the way?

HARRY. (*turns to door*) Yes, thanks, the house was pointed out to me. I'll see you later Nat. I hope I may see you before I leave Miss Lockwood.

JOSIE. Thanks, I hope so.

NAT. Hurry back.

HARRY. I will Good evening.

JOSIE. Good evening.

(*Exit HARRY.*)

JOSIE. Did you know Mr. Kellogg in New York?

NAT. Yes, New York and other places. What are you doing down town? I thought you were ill!

JOSIE. Aren't you glad to see me?

NAT. You should know I am, but it's unexpected. (*goes up R.*)

JOSIE. (*crossing L. turns*) I came down town because I just had to ask you something.

NAT. What?

JOSIE. Why did you run away from the meeting? Why didn't you walk home with me?

NAT. (*trying to act as if he were hurt*) I told you over the phone.

JOSIE. Oh, how silly you are.

NAT. (*with a sigh*) We are all silly—on certain occasions——

JOSIE. You don't really think I wanted Roland Barnett to take me home, do you?

NAT. It seemed so, but that's all right—why shouldn't you?

JOSIE. (*up c.*) Must I tell you?

NAT. (*alarmed coming to her*) Oh no, please don't.

JOSIE. I see that I must. You are so blind, it was because I wanted to be with *you*. There—(*going down L. c.*) Now I've said it.

NAT. (*in the hope of changing the subject following her down*) Oh, but you don't mean it—I know you don't. You're saying that because you have such a tender heart, and don't want to hurt me—you—(*he stops half suspecting what is coming.*)

JOSIE. Nat, would it make you happy if you knew I meant it?

NAT. (*looks around and then at her uncertainly*) Well, what do you *think*?

JOSIE. Then please believe me when I say it.

NAT. Oh no don't say it.

JOSIE. You know I like you. It's awfully hard for me, Nat, to have folks think that I'm pursuing you and that you are trying to avoid me.

NAT. (*scoldingly*) Josie!

JOSIE. Well, that's the way it looks. You don't want it to appear that way, do you?

NAT. Of course I don't.

JOSIE. Then—then why don't you stop it?

NAT. I can't.

JOSIE. (*coyly*) If you liked me as well as I like you, you would—

NAT. (*comic despair going L.*) Ah, child, you don't know what you're saying.

JOSIE. Yes, I do. (*NAT stops suddenly and looks at her*) I don't believe you care anything about me.

NAT. Oh Josie, please.

JOSIE. Well, you've never told me so.

NAT. (*going to her*) Don't you see that I shouldn't. Why, just think! You are an only daughter—an only daughter. (*tears in voice*) Not only your father's only daughter, but your mother's only daughter. Your father is my friend. How unfair, it would be to him.

JOSIE. O pap wants you to, he told me so.

NAT. (*crossing R. then turns*) But listen, Josie; you are rich, an heiress, I am a poor man. Would you want it said that I was after your money? (*going to her*)

JOSIE. No one would dare even think such a thing.

NAT. Oh yes, they would, you don't know the world as I do. And, for all you know they might be right. How could you tell that——

JOSIE. Oh, don't say such horrid things, I could tell. A woman always can. I know you'd be incapable of such a thing. Papa knows it too. No one has ever got ahead of papa, and he says you are a fine, steady, Christian man and he would rather see me your wife than anyone he knows.

NAT. This is so sudden. (*goes up R. of desk and then turns*) Josie, the time has come—you must know the truth!

JOSIE. Oh, Nat!

NAT. I am *not* what you think me.

JOSIE. Oh, Nat! (*moving toward him*)

NAT. Nor what your father thinks me!

JOSIE. OH NAT! (*goes back a step*)

NAT. Nor what anyone in this town thinks me. Oh, Nat—excuse me—I wanted to save you from saying it again. I am not a Christian—it's all a bluff—I didn't know anything about a church until I came here. I smoke and I drink and I swear, and I gamble; and I cut them out just to trick you into caring for me——

JOSIE. I don't believe it!

NAT. (*with pretended grief*) Ah alas, Josie! It's true, only too true. (*he buries his face in his hands*)

JOSIE. (*after a pause*) Nevertheless, Nat. I will be your wife! (*going to him, puts her arms around his neck*)

NAT. (*suddenly looking up in great alarm*) Josie!

JOSIE. Nat—my——

(NAT drops his head on her shoulder in despair.)

NAT. (*with change of manner and real seriousness*) Josie—I'll try to make you a good husband—and that wasn't in the agreement.

(PETER WILLING enters R. staggering. He is somewhat intoxicated and has a bad cut on his forehead.)

PETE. 'Scuse me. Kin I see you a minute, Doc? (*goes R. and sits weakly in front of counter R. C.*)

NAT. Hello, Pete, what's happened to you?

JOSIE. (*in alarm*) Perhaps I'd better go. (*getting between door and PETE*)

NAT. I can't leave the store just now—if you'll wait——

JOSIE. (*another frightened look at PETE*) I don't mind going alone one bit. (*frightened look at PETE*) I'll telephone you later—(*very low tone*) Good night, dearest, I'm so happy. (*she kisses him and exits quickly R.*)

NAT. (*stands a moment looking after her; shakes his head and turns to PETER*) Well, Pete, let's have a look. (*pulls PETE's hand away from forehead*) Great Scott! That's a bird, who hit you?

PETE. Wife.

NAT. (*looks again where JOSIE went off and shivers*) Wife, eh? (*goes out of door U. L. for bowl*) Well she certainly gave it to you good.

PETE. She'll kill me some day.

NAT. (*still collecting remedies for PETE, goes behind counter. Gets cotton and adhesive plaster, etc.*) Oh, don' say that.

PETE. (*positively*) Yes, she will—*sure!* But I'd about as soon be dead as to live with her.

NAT. You'd been drinking again, hadn't you? (*going up ladder up c. to get carbolic*)

PETE. Yes, but she drove me to it. Mr. Duncan, you ain't got no idea how lucky you be that ye ain't married.

NAT. (*regarding him for a moment*) Is that so?

PETE. No idee at all. And I hope you won't never have.

NAT. But I'm going to be married, Pete.

PETE. (*with great excitement*) Oh, no. *Don't* Mr. Duncan! Don't you never do it! You take warnin' by me.

NAT. But I'm engaged.

PETE. Then break it off, for God's sake, break it off—now—before it's too late. Do anything rather than that—drink—lie—steal—murder—commit suicide. I don't care what—only—*keep single!*

NAT. But suppose you get a lot of money by marrying? (*down to desk, preparing bandage*)

PETE. No matter how much you get, *it ain't enough!* (*turns front*)

NAT. I'm inclined to think you're about right, Pete. (*bathing wound*)

PETE. You bet I'm right, I'm married and I know!

NAT. (*finishing bandaging*) There, that's better. Now go home and let me see you sober in the morning. (*puts bandages, etc., away*)

PETE. I ain't going home to-night.

NAT. You've got to get some sleep. That's the only way you can straighten up.

PETE. Well, I'll go over to the barn and sleep with the horse.

NAT. Won't he step on you?

PETE. Maybe, but I'd rather risk him than my wife.

(ROLAND enters R. *He is in a rage. Stops on seeing NAT and PETE.*)

ROLAND. (to NAT) Say, I want to see you——

NAT. Well, go ahead and have a good look!

ROLAND. Don't try to be funny or you may get hurt.

PETE. (suddenly turning on ROLAND) What d'ye mean by that?

NAT. That's all right, Pete. Don't get nervous, Rolly won't hurt anybody.

ROLAND. Now don't you——

NAT. (warningly) Ah! Ah! Ah! Careful! Be a good boy now!

ROLAND. Do you think——

PETE. (starting to ROLAND) Here you——

NAT. Let him alone—(leads PETE toward the door)

PETE. I ain't afraid of him.

NAT. Neither am I.

PETE. (going to door) I can lick anybody in town—except my wife. (exits R. NAT, turns to ROLAND and there is a short pause)

ROLAND. Now see here, me and you's apt to have trouble.

NAT. Oh, really, who'll start it?

ROLAND. I'll start it and start it damn quick if you don't leave Josie Lockwood alone.

NAT. You don't tell me!

ROLAND. Yes, I do tell ye. Ye got her to come back here again tonight after I took her home from meetin'. From now on I want you to let her alone, and you'll do it too if you know what's best for yourself.

NAT. (*turns to ROLAND*) What do you mean by this line of talk?

ROLAND. I'll tell you what I mean. I was a-goin' with Josie Lockwood steady for more'n a year before you came here and you thought on account of her money you'd sneak in and cut me out.

NAT. Was her money the reason you were after her.

ROLAND. (*uncertainly*) N—no, and 'tain't no business of yours if it were. But here's what I'm gettin' at. (*slowly and impressively*) A cashier skipped out of the New York National Bank about ten months ago. And they ain't got no track of him yet.

NAT. Indeed.

ROLAND. I've had my suspicious all along but the other day I got a description of him and the description just fits—want to see it— (*holding paper toward NAT*)

NAT. Fits what——

ROLAND. Oh don't you try to be so darned innocent, you can't fool me.

NAT. So you think I was that bank fellow, eh?

ROLAND. You keep away from Josie or you'll find out what I think. Why if I was to show this to Mr. Lockwood.

NAT. That will do for this evening, thanks.

ROLAND. Are you goin' to quit chasin' after her?

NAT. I'll begin chasing after you, if you don't get out of here!

ROLAND. You better agree——

NAT. (*grabbing ROLAND by the coat collar and pushing him quickly out of door R. After he has*

thrown ROLAND out he picks up his hat and holds it out to him) Here's your hat.

ROLAND. (*outside*) Throw it out here.

NAT. Come in again any time when you want to apologize. (*the phone bell rings. NAT goes to it and takes down receiver*) Eh hello, Josie—what—that's right, but I'm not used to it yet you know—let me try again. Now ready? (*sweetly*) Hello, oh hello darling! How's that? Told your father. Told him what? About the engagement. (*hopefully*) Was he angry? (*resignedly*) Oh he wasn't, eh? What did he say? (*listlessly*) Wasn't that nice of him? (*door opens and BETTY enters. NAT turns and sees her—He doesn't know her at first. To BETTY*) Just a moment please—why if it isn't Betty. (*hangs up receiver quickly and goes to BETTY and takes both her hands*)

BETTY. Nat!

NAT. Hanged if I knew you at first!

BETTY. I tried to wait until closing time but I just couldn't do it! (*NAT begins to comprehend the great change in her and the feeling grows as she continues speaking*) I didn't send word. I was coming to-night, I wanted to surprise you—all of you! (*NAT is still staring*) Tracey told you I was here, didn't he? (*noticing NAT's stare*) Why what is the matter?

NAT. (*pulling himself together with an effort*) Why I—(*short laugh*) Gad! You nearly took my breath away! I—I can hardly believe it.

BETTY. Believe what?

NAT. That you are little Betty Graham. I never saw such a change.

BETTY. (*a little wistfully*) It's a change for the better, isn't it, Nat? (*crossing over L.*)

NAT. I should think it was! It's marvelous, Betty.

BETTY. Did I use to be so awful then?

NAT. Awful! Nonsense, you know you weren't only, now——

BETTY. (*her voice a little unsteady with great gratitude*) Does it make you a little proud? (*sitting down at soda counter*)

NAT. What do you mean?

BETTY. To know you've done it all?

NAT. Rot! You did it yourself. (*comes over and sits half facing her*)

BETTY. (*very sincerely*) Oh no! Why Nat, you began it the first day I saw you in the old store, by the things you said to me. Then I watched you as you made life a heaven for father and me; and I thought, if I were a man I'd try to be as near like you as I could. The time you told me you were going to send me to school, I said to myself, "I'll follow his example just as near as I possibly can—I'll work ever so hard and I'll try to treat people as he treats them, and, oh, Nat, it's worked so wonderfully! It's made all the girls at school like me, and *now*, what's ten thousand times best of all, you notice an improvement the moment you see me! And I, I never was so happy in my life. (*BETTY caresses his hand, which she has held through this speech*) Nat, you are the very best man in the whole world!

NAT. Don't—don't for Heaven's sake!

BETTY. I know you don't like me to tell you this, but I am going to just the same. Why father and I both cried when he showed me how you'd fixed up the house.

NAT. (*laughing*) Is it as bad as that?

BETTY. (*with a little laugh*) Oh Nat, don't. You must let me tell you the truth about yourself. It's splendid to live the life you do. You are all unconscious of it and I want you to realize it? It makes everybody love you—

NAT. (*after a long pause*) That's right! That was the idea—(*BETTY looks at him surprised.*

There is a pause) Betty does it make you—er—feel that way toward me?

BETTY. Why of course—everyone who—(*stops suddenly and turns away embarrassed*) Oh Nat.

NAT. (*not noticing*) That's why I came here Betty! (*BETTY still turned away and not understanding. NAT is facing front and now looks down*) Yes, I—came here with the idea of getting married—(*BETTY takes a deep breath and waits, her hands clasped—her head up*) You never guessed that did you?

BETTY. (*almost breathing the word*) No!

NAT. (*still looking down*) Well, it's the truth, and I can't tell you now—not now——

BETTY. No, Nat dear not now. (*happily*) I—think I'd better go home—I—(*getting up and going R.*)

NAT. (*looking suddenly at her, realizing she doesn't understand*) Wait, Betty—I must tell you—I must. (*she stops C. she stands motionless, expecting he will tell her he loves her*) To-night I—to-night—I became engaged to Josie Lockwood.

BETTY. (*stands paralyzed, but not a muscle of her face changes. There is a long pause. When she speaks her voice is perfectly steady and sweet*) Oh Nat dear, I'm so glad for you. I wish you all the happiness in the world. Good night!

(*With a set smile she goes slowly to the door and exits quietly and naturally, without showing a trace of emotion. When she is gone, NAT, after a pause looks toward door, speaks between his teeth.*)

NAT. (C.) Blithering fool! Why didn't I know I loved her like this? (*springing up behind soda counter*) Well, the rules are off! I can have a drink—I can have a million drinks—if I want them.

(*gets bottle of whiskey from counter, pours out big drink, takes a swallow, makes a wry face, sets glass down*) Ugh! I've lost my taste for it! I can have a smoke. That'll help a little. (*goes to cigar counter, takes cigar, lights it, crosses to c. takes two puffs, throws it away*) I've got so I don't like 'em any more. Oh I'll be—I'll be—God help me I've forgotten how to swear.

(SPERRY enters R.)

SPERRY. Good evening, Mr. Duncan. How are you to-night?

NAT. (*fiercely*) Rotten! (*going L.*)

SPERRY. Dear me! What's the trouble?

NAT. Long story. (*going up to cigar counter getting hat*)

SPERRY. Perhaps you'd rather not see me to-night.

NAT. No!

SPERRY. I'm sorry—good evening. (*starts for door*)

HARRY. (*running in*) Heard about you at the Lockwood's Nat. (*offering hand*) Let me con—

NAT. Keep away from me! Keep away I tell you! You and your confounded systems have got me into all this—(*starts towards door*)

HARRY. What's the matter with you? Here hold on—where are you going?

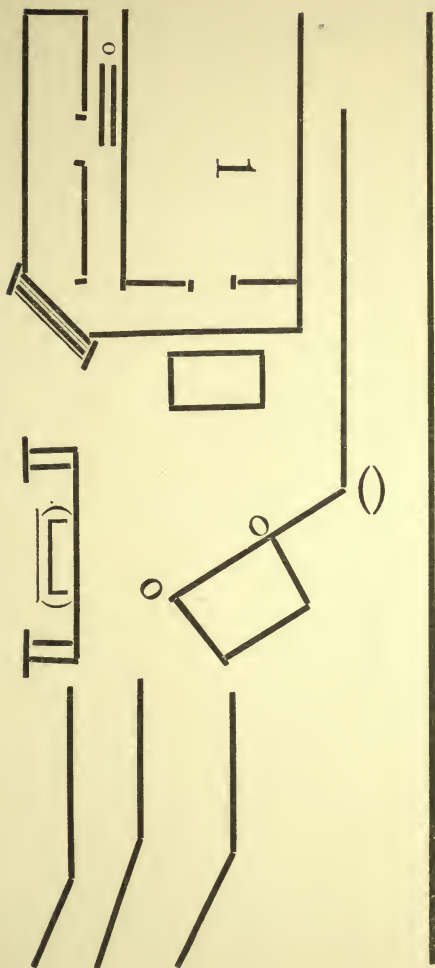
NAT. To the only place I can get consolation.

HARRY. What!

NAT. I'm going back to church!

[(*He exits R.* HARRY and SPERRY stand in amazement looking after him.)]

CURTAIN.



IV.

ACT IV.

House and grounds of SAM GRAHAM'S Home.

(House D. R. with door and steps facing C. windows upstairs and down stairs all having curtains and shades. Veranda all the way round house. Trailing vines on porch. Light streaming from window R. onto porch. Hat rack with hat and coat and umbrella just inside of door. The back drop shows undulating country, with river, and several houses setting on hills in the distance. Large tree directly in the C. Rose bush L. C. Summer house up L. with bench all round on the inside. A rose bush R. and another L. of summer house. Hammock swinging on a frame down L. Bench at side of porch.

TIME.—About 9 o'clock at night and effects show gathering of storm. Foliage borders overhead. Wood wings, ground cloth is green with a gray path leading from Porch to L. and down stage a strip of rubber tarpaulin for catching the rain. At first border rain pipes, etc. Borders blue at rise. Olivet floods in all the entrances. White foots one third up, at rise. Baby spot on each side in First Entrance.

Same evening as ACT III.

DISCOVERED.—BETTY and ANGIE sitting on the porch. TRACEY enters hurriedly up L. Crosses to girls.

TRACEY. (rushing on excitedly from L. to R.)

What do you think, Nat and Josie's just got engaged!

ANGIE. No?

TRACEY. Yep.

ANGIE. How do you know?

TRACEY. Nat let me off just now to go and call on you and they told me at the house you were over here with Betty and as I came back by the store I saw a strange man in there all alone and he told me that Nat had just got engaged and left him there so I locked up. (*BETTY gets up, starts into house, stops when ANGIE speaks to her*)

ANGIE. I don't believe it. Did you know about it, Betty?

BETTY. Yes, Nat just told me.

ANGIE. Wasn't you surprised most to death?
(*leaning against porch post*)

BETTY. Er—yes—I was——

TRACEY. Ah, I knew it was comin'—(*sitting down on steps*)

ANGIE. You did?

TRACEY. Yes, certainly I did—(*very proudly*)
'Twas me fixed it up.

ANGIE. (*incrudulously*) You!

TRACEY. Ah—ha! I told him to-night Josie was after him and as soon's he found it out he got engaged to her. Didn't waste no time about, did he?
(*looking at BETTY and ANGIE*)

BETTY. No.

TRACEY. (*looking at ANGIE lovingly*) Gee! I wish I could get it over's quick as that.

ANGIE. Tracey!

BETTY. That's right, Tracey—why don't you try?
I'll go in and give you a chance. (*goes to door*)

TRACEY. Oh no—don't go.

BETTY. Yes, I will!

TRACEY. Please don't go.

BETTY. But I want to see Father. (*she exits into house*)

TRACEY. Gee, I'm glad she's gone.

ANGIE. What made you say that before her?

TRACEY. I didn't mean to. I was thinkin' it and it slipped out.

ANGIE. It was perfectly terrible.

TRACEY. Was it? (*goes over to the hammock*)
Come on over in the hammock.

ANGIE. I will not.

TRACEY. (*coming back to her*) Aw why? They'll be comin' out here on the stoop.

ANGIE. What if they do?

TRACEY. Well—(*hesitates*)—we can't get engaged with folks hangin' around, kin we?

ANGIE. The idea. I don't want to get engaged.

TRACEY. You said you would last night.

ANGIE. But I said not for ever so long.

TRACEY. Well, it's to-night now. That's ever so long enough for me. Aw come on over in the hammock. (*goes over toward hammock*) I want to be engaged now. You ought to let me have my way about somethin'.

ANGIE. (*rises in pretended disgust*) If you talk like that I'm going! (*she goes down on lawn in front of hammock*)

TRACEY. Oh look!

ANGIE. What? (*stops in front of hammock*)

TRACEY. Here's the hammock.

ANGIE. Oh no—we mustn't—(*looking to sky up stage*) Look, it's going to rain.

TRACEY. (*seating her into the hammock, sits beside her*) Then let's hurry—we ain't got much time. (*swings hammock gently*)

(*ROLAND comes around above the house up c. quickly*)

TRACEY. Oh shucks!

ROLAND. (*starts to house when he sees TRACEY*)
Is that you Tracey?

TRACEY. Yep! One of us is me——

ROLAND. (*crossing L.*) Well go and tell Nat Duncan I want to see him.

TRACEY. Tell him yourself—can't you see I'm busy?

ROLAND. You young—(*he starts to porch*)

TRACEY. He ain't in the house.

ROLAND. Where is he? (*stops with one foot on bottom step*)

TRACEY. Over callin' on his financee.

ROLAND. What?

TRACEY. Josie Lockwood and him is engaged—That's what—I always knowed he'd cut you out.

ROLAND. (*wildly crossing L. behind TRACEY and flourishing a paper*) He'll never marry her. I'll tell you that. I've got proof of what Nat Duncan is here—and I'm going to show it to Mr. Lockwood right now. (*exits quickly*)

ANGIE. What do you suppose he means?

TRACEY. Oh he's crazy—don't pay any attention to him. He's gone—that's all I care. (*they swing again. TRACEY puts his arm around her*) Say Angie when you heard Nat and Josie were engaged didn't it make you feel kind a—lonesome? (*ANGIE nods "yes"*) It did me. Now we——

(PETE WILLING comes on from U. R.)

PETE. Excuse me. (*goes down C.*)

TRACEY. Oh shucks. Here comes another.

PETE. I want to see Mr.—(*seeing TRACEY and ANGIE in hammock and crossing to L. to hammock*) Oh Tracey, 'tain't true Mr. Duncan's getting married, is it?

TRACEY. No—but he's engaged. That's the next best thing.

PETE. (*comes over to hammock*) The next worst thing, but I just heard he was gettin' married, to-night. 'Tain't so, is it?

TRACEY. No.

PETE. (*with great relief*) Then there's time yet. I'm a-goin' to save him. He's the best friend I've got and I made up my mind to kill him sooner than see him married. (*puts his hand into his hip pocket as if getting out pistol.* ANGIE holds on to TRACEY. TRACEY puts his arms protectingly around her and PETE pulls out his handkerchief and wipes his forehead) But engagements kin be broke, thank God! (*moves R.*)

TRACEY. (*turning*) You must be crazy I guess.

PETE. No I ain't. I was once but I got sense now it's too late.

ANGIE. Why Pete, don't you believe in gettin' married?

PETE. Not for a man, I don't. (*eyeing them an instant*) Here, don't you go gettin' Tracey there to marry you. He's too nice a little fellow. If you care anythin' about him show it 'by makin' him keep single.

TRACEY. (*getting out of hammock and going toward PETE*) Here, you git away from here.

PETE. (*going L.*) Oh all right! Just for getting sassy I hope you'll have to marry her.

(*Exits L. At PETE'S exit, enter GRAHAM from house*)

TRACEY. (*loudly*) Go on now.

GRAHAM. (*on porch*) What's the matter, Tracey? You're not fighting with Angie, are you?

TRACEY. (*going back into hammock, sits R. of ANGIE*) No—ain't even had a chance to talk to her, everybody keeps comin' around jest at the wrong time.

GRAHAM. Well—I don't see anything to disturb you now—if I get out of your way—(*turning to go into the house*)

ANGIE. Oh no, don't Mr. Graham. We must go any way.

(Enter up R. KELLOGG.)

KELLOGG. (C.) I beg pardon but is this where Mr. Duncan lives?

GRAHAM. Yes sir.

TRACEY. (to ANGIE) That settles it—come on, Angie. (starts around hammock with ANGIE and starting off L.)

GRAHAM. (to HARRY) He'll be here soon I expect. Going, Tracey?

TRACEY. Yep. It's time Angie was gittin' home. Good night. (getting hat out of hammock)

ANGIE. Good night.

GRAHAM. Good night—come again. } (together)

TRACEY. (to GRAHAM) We will—(to ANGIE) Sometime when everybody ain't lookin' for Nat. (they exit L.)

KELLOGG. (turning to GRAHAM) Are you Mr. Graham?

GRAHAM. Yes sir! (on porch)

KELLOGG. Then I've got some news for you.

GRAHAM. For me? (down off steps)

KELLOGG. Yes, and I'd like to talk it over with you before Nat comes. My name is Kellogg.

GRAHAM. Kellogg! Not Henry Kellogg—Nat's friend?

KELLOGG. Yes, I'm the fellow.

GRAHAM. (shaking hands heartily) Well, well, well! I'm real glad to see you. Sit right down. Do! My what a surprise this will be for Nat! (going toward porch and calling) Betty!

BETTY. (in house) Yes?

GRAHAM. There's some one out here you'll be glad to see!

(Smiles and motions HARRY not to give it away.)

KELLOGG. (going C.) Your little girl?

GRAHAM. (*proudly backing behind KELLOGG*) Yes, sir, just home from school. (*BETTY opens door—comes quickly on to porch—stops suddenly at steps upon seeing a stranger*) Who do you suppose this is?

BETTY. (*looking at HARRY—with a little laugh*) I don't know.

GRAHAM. Nat's old friend—Mr. Kellogg!

BETTY. Oh! (*comes quickly down steps and shakes hands cordially*) How do you do Mr. Kellogg?

KELLOGG. So you're the little girl. (*GRAHAM nods "yes"*)

BETTY. (R. C.) Have you seen Nat?

KELLOGG. (L. C.) Yes, he just left me.

GRAHAM. (L. C.) Oh! How delighted he must have been.

KELLOGG. You'd have thought so if you'd heard what he said to me.

GRAHAM. Where is he?

KELLOGG. In church.

BETTY. (*astonished*) Church? Why did he go back there?

KELLOGG. (*looking at her admiringly*) By jove, I think I've just found out.

BETTY. Oh you've heard—(*trying to keep her voice steady*) That—that Nat is engaged to be married?

KELLOGG. (*quietly*) Yes, I've heard it. (*there is a moment's pause*)

GRAHAM. (*trying to be cheerful about it—and looking uneasily at BETTY*) It was quite a surprise to us—He must have decided very suddenly.

KELLOGG. (*smiling*) No—he had the idea when he came here.

GRAHAM. It'll seem queer without him at the store.

KELLOGG. (*looking curiously at the old man and*

BETTY) Yes, you won't care to lose him, I suppose?

BETTY. Nat is very dear to Father and me, Mr. Kellogg, and we'll be glad of anything that will make him happy——

GRAHAM. (*who is near BETTY, puts his arm about her and holds her a moment, then tries to change the subject*) Better ask Miss Carpenter if the spare room's ready, Betty?

BETTY. (*before HARRY can interrupt, goes up steps onto porch*) Oh yes—(*to HARRY*) and I'll get you and Nat some supper. (*in doorway*)

KELLOGG. Please don't trouble.

BETTY. It isn't any trouble—it's fun. (*she goes into house quickly*)

GRAHAM. (*he takes a step toward porch to make sure BETTY is out of hearing*) I thought I wouldn't talk about the engagement before her for a while. You see Nat's been so much to us that it's sort of a shock just at first——

KELLOGG. I understand—and I won't mention it again. (*crossing down R.*)

GRAHAM. Thank you—(*cheerful tone again*) I believe you said you had something to tell me before Nat came——

KELLOGG. Oh yes—quite an important business matter—(*sitting on lower end of steps*)

GRAHAM. Business? Oh then you'd better wait 'till he comes.

KELLOGG. Why?

GRAHAM. (R. C.). I guess you know why. Nat's often told me of your wonderful success in Wall Street and I've always felt what a great help he must have been to you. It must have been very hard for you to get on without him to advise you——

KELLOGG. Are you talking about Nat?

GRAHAM. Why yes——

KELLOGG. (*laughing*) Well, I've managed some-

how. But Nat tells me this matter is entirely your affair——(*taking telegram from his pocket*) Here's a telegram I just received to-night from our attorneys. (*reading*) Modern Gas Company offer fifty thousand dollars and ten thousand shares stock for Graham patent. Advise us." (GRAHAM *looks up front thoughtfully*) I consider that a very fair offer——

GRAHAM. (*half to himself*) Fifty thousand dollars. He's a wonderful boy—wonderful!

KELLOGG. Well, what do you think?

GRAHAM. Eh?

KELLOGG. About accepting this proposition——

GRAHAM. Oh, that's just as he says.

KELLOGG. Just as he says, but I understand Nat owns no part of this patent.

GRAHAM. He owns it all.

KELLOGG. (*surprised*) What! But he told me it was all yours.

GRAHAM. Yes, of course he did, that's just like him.

KELLOGG. But what arrangement did you have?

GRAHAM. We didn't have any.

KELLOGG. Then why in Heaven's name do you say it's all Nat's?

GRAHAM. (R. C.) Well, I'll tell you. Suppose you were an old man, Mr. Kellogg, who'd failed at everything you'd undertaken—suppose you had a little motherless girl that you loved but because of your inability she went about so shabby and forlorn that all the young folks laughed at her and wouldn't have anything to do with her. Suppose you'd come to the end and were about to be turned out of your store when along comes a young fellow and gave you every dollar he had in the world to start you over again and then he worked with all his might—day after day until he'd made everything comfortable and easy for you, suppose he changed your shabby little girl into

a beautiful young woman and then a patent that you'd have sold for \$500, only for him suddenly brought you in a whole lot of money, who would you think it belonged to?

KELLOGG. (*quietly rising*) I didn't realize how much he meant to you.

NAT. (*enters quickly L. goes C.*) Hello Governor! (*seeing KELLOGG*) Oh, here you are—Where's your luggage?

KELLOGG. (*crossing to L. C.*) My man has it at the hotel.

GRAHAM. (*starting up*) I'll go after it.

NAT. Oh no—but you might telephone and tell them to show Mr. Kellogg's man the way over here.

GRAHAM. Yes, I will. (*exits into house*)

NAT. Thanks. (*turns to HARRY and looks at him steadily*) Well I'm not going through with this thing.

HARRY. No? (*crossing to C.*)

NAT. (*getting check and note from his pocket*) No—Here's a check for four hundred—all the money I've got now—and a note for the balance.

KELLOGG. (*relenting*) Oh Nat, I don't want these.

NAT. You'll take them just the same—I'd rather pay that back than be president.

KELLOGG. Well, we'll talk this over later. First, what are you going to do?

NAT. The only thing left to do. See Lockwood and his daughter and tell him the whole thing.

KELLOGG. You've got a pleasant little job ahead of you.

NAT. I don't care about that. It's Josie I'm thinking of. Why it's awful Harry to trick a girl into caring for you and then to—to——

HARRY. To break her heart? Don't flatter yourself. It isn't that she loves you—it's because you're the best chance she's seen. My system would have

worked just as well if anyone else had tried it. (*going down R.*)

NAT. Do you think so?

HARRY. (*coming up and sitting on upper end of steps R.*) I'm sure of it—The trouble is that people know you're engaged, and they'll say you've thrown her over and that's going to make her feel pretty cheap for a while, but she'll get over it, only you'll lose a fortune, don't forget that.

NAT. No, I won't—I never had it and I don't want it.

HARRY. Well, I hope you'll always feel that way about it but you'll find money a great help if you want to live a happy life.

NAT. There are better things than money to make a man happy.

HARRY. You got that from a book.

NAT. No I didn't—I found it out.

HARRY. How?

NAT. I had everything when I was in college—youth, health and all the money I wanted and lots of friends and I thought I was a pretty lucky and a pretty happy kid but I know how you can beat that sort of happiness to death. Harry, the real way to be happy is to work and have your work amount to something and to have someone who believes in you to work for.

HARRY. Oh you're learning how to preach.

NAT. Call it what you like but it goes just the same. I've found that out this year. (*goes L. C.*)

HARRY. (*getting up and going to NAT C.*) And you're right. I'm glad you backed out, it was a low down scheme and I proposed it—well, I suppose, because I'm a schemer and I knew it would work—but it's made a man of you Nat and I'm mighty glad.

NAT. (*looks at him surprised*) What has changed you all of a sudden?

HARRY. I've talked with Graham and I've seen his daughter.

NAT. Oh!

HARRY. And now if you don't mind I'd like to see her again. (*goes R. on to porch*)

(*ROLAND, LOCKWOOD, JOSIE and PETE enter L.*)

(*Dim out borders.*)

ROLAND. Here he is.

LOCKWOOD. So, we've found you.

NAT. I didn't know I was lost.

LOCKWOOD. (C.) I want a word with you young man.

(*JOSIE R. C. ROLAND L. PETE R. at porch.*)

NAT. Well, sir?

LOCKWOOD. There ain't no use beatin' around the bush. You've behaved yourself since you been in this town, but nobody knows who you are or what you were before you came here, and now Roland's made a charge again you.

ROLAND. I accused him of it to-night and he didn't deny it.

LOCKWOOD. And he says he can prove it?

NAT. (*indignantly*) Prove what?

ROLAND. That you're a thief with a reward out for you. You're James Hilton that ran away from the N. Y. National Bank.

NAT. (*starting toward ROLAND*) Why you——

LOCKWOOD. (*Interposing*) Hold on—you got my daughter to say she'd marry you to-night, and I want to know more about this bank business before it goes any further.

(*NAT stops suddenly. Looks at LOCKWOOD a moment and then at JOSIE—then front showing he's decided to take this way out.*)

LOCKWOOD. Do you deny it? (*pause*) Answer!

NAT. I refuse to answer.

ROLAND. Ah—ha! What did I tell you?

JOSIE. (*indignantly. To NAT*) What does this mean?

NAT. Don't ask me.

JOSIE. Is it true?

NAT. You heard what he said.

JOSIE. Oh—I—I despise you.

NAT. That's all right—I've despised myself all the evening.

JOSIE. (*turning to LOCKWOOD*) Papa!

LOCKWOOD. Don't give me the credit—thank Roland—he got on to him.

JOSIE. (*going L. to ROLAND*) I do thank you Roland and I can never be grateful enough. Won't you take me away from this place?

ROLAND. (*steps out toward NAT*) I'll be mighty glad to see you home if you'll let me.

JOSIE. I'd like to have you very much—oh, Roland, how foolish I've been—I believe I've liked you best all along. (*they go R.*)

ROLAND. (*stopping R. C.*) I never saw anybody from New York yet that wasn't a crook.

JOSIE. (*they turn up stage and she catches NAT's eye and stops*) How did you *dare* pretend to care for me?

NAT. It was one of the rules.

JOSIE. There is no need to say I suppose that the engagement is broken.

PETE. Come along to jail Mr. Duncan—Much better.

(JOSIE and ROLAND *exit L.*)

LOCKWOOD. (*to PETE*) You look after him—I'll attend to his case in the morning. I'll make you wish you'd never come to this town. (*exits L.*)

(Dim out foots.)

NAT. *(starts after him)* Say look here——

PETE. You've been saved just in time, Mr. Duncan—My, my, my, you're a lucky man. Now you better make tracks—I ain't got no warrant to hold you—and I wouldn't if I had.

NAT. I'm not the fellow they think I am and it's easy enough to prove it.

PETE. Git out just the same or you may have to marry her after all.

NAT. No, I won't.

PETE. Thank God for that—I feel so good about this, I'm goin' home and give my wife hell!

(NAT and KELLOGG laugh. KELLOGG comes down off porch.)

HARRY. Well that was a bit of luck.

NAT. A bit of luck! It's more luck than I thought there was in the whole world. *(goes L.)*

HARRY. Here, where are you going?

NAT. Over to have it out with Lockwood.

HARRY. You better leave Lockwood to me.

NAT. All right—tell him——

HARRY. I know what to tell him.

NAT. Thanks Harry.

BETTY. *(coming out of house)* Supper is ready and—*(seeing NAT is there alone she stops suddenly, embarrassed)*

NAT. Betty—I want to tell you something. *(she comes down to him)* Do you happen to remember that I told you awhile ago I was engaged to Josie Lockwood——

BETTY. What do you mean?

NAT. Nothing much only it's broken off.

BETTY. Broken off! Why?

NAT. Because I love you.

BETTY. Oh, Nat, I don't understand.

NAT. It was a plan, a scheme, my coming here, everything I did, a disgraceful, contemptible trick, (rain) but it's different now. I love you, Betty and I want to be a man. Won't you forgive me and be my wife?

(During this speech rain starts—as rain starts GRAHAM comes into door of house and sees them and they are all unconscious of the rain—GRAHAM goes in and gets umbrella and holds it over them.)

BETTY. I've loved you from the first day I ever saw you, you know I have. *(they embrace)*

(Second Curtain. GRAHAM, BETTY and NAT going into house under umbrella.)

CURTAIN.

**RETURN TO: CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
198 Main Stacks**

LOAN PERIOD	1	2	3
Home Use			
	4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS.

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